

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY
MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 590.

FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 21ST, 1900.

[ONE PENNY.]

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SHORT STORIES

No. 590.]

[1d.

For the Week
Ending
April 21st 1900.



The Eldest Miss Curzon.

"WELL, mother, I think you will allow that my chance has come at last, and if I cannot profit by it, then it will not be my fault," said the eldest Miss Curzon as she glanced at her reflection in the mirror over the mantel-piece with a pleased little smile.

"My dear, I hope—I do hope you will," replied a thin, tired looking woman who had been reading a letter.

She, too, looked at the reflection of her handsome daughter in the glass and fervently hoped that she might find favour in the eyes of the Rector's nephew—for Marion was twenty-seven and unattached.

"Pah!" cried Harold, who was eighteen and did not believe his sisters either pretty, clever or fascinating, after the manner of brothers. "Pah! who'd be fool enough to marry you? Not Sir Kenneth Brakspeare I'm thinking."

Marion cast a withering glance in the direction of the speaker, and then continued talking to her mother.

"I haven't had a chance after all said and done. I've waited in this hole of a place for someone to come—and someone has come at last—so we shall see!"

"There is a brother staying with him also, isn't there?" asked the flaxen-haired Grace, who seldom said much.

"Yes, they're both there. The letter says Sir Kenneth has come to see his uncle—he is the only relative living,

and Richard has come with him to say good-bye as his regiment is ordered to India, and she hopes the girls will come over often, because she is afraid the young men will find it dull," said Mrs. Curzon, quoting from the letter.

"But there is Janie and Vi," put in Grace, "their own cousins."

"Really, Grace! I am surprised that I should own a sister who can be so persistently stupid. As if any men living, let alone men in the Service, could bear to speak to Janie or Vi for more than two minutes—the idea is laughable."

Grace shrank back abashed. She felt her inferiority beside her majestic sister keenly.

"Well, he has a brother, Marion, so perhaps if Sir Kenneth," she hazarded timidly, but she was cut short with:

"You may have the brother—Sir Kenneth or nothing is my mark. Our family wants raising and it is I who am chosen to do it, I can see that!" and she did not look unlike the pictures of Britannia with her red gold hair and steel blue eyes—a trifle hard the eyes perhaps, but still pretty enough at times.

"Well, from what one might gather from your conversation, you intend to lay siege to this Johnny and marry him whether he likes it or not," said Harold.

"That is fairly true—except that he will like it," replied his sister with a conscious shake of her pretty head. "There is one thing—you won't want any new dresses, will you, Marion. The ones you had to go to the Masseys will do," said Grace.

"I shall want several new dresses, on the contrary, and nobody ought to know that better than you! Titled and rich men don't come so often this way but that they are worth a little trouble when they do come."

Mrs. Curzon sighed plaintively and glanced at several unpaid bills on the side table. Not that she would call her eldest daughter extravagant—oh, no, but still sometimes it was a little hard to keep pace with the demands made upon the domestic exchequer by Marion.

"Don't sigh like that, mother," cried Marion sharply. "I can't help those bills. Every other girl has money to dress on but me, and you knew as well as I—"

"Oh, yes, my dear," with a deprecating wave of the hands. "I know you must—we will go into Exeter this morning and

choose a few things." And Marion left the room with a look of stern resolution to win or die, as Harold said, adding, as the door closed:

"Cheer up, Grace. When she's married you and I will have larks all by ourselves; it will be jolly!"

But Grace was wondering whether one of Marion's "Massey" gowns would fit her, and if not, what was she to appear in at the Rectory so that she might not proclaim the family poverty and disgrace her sister.

* * * * *

"Let me introduce my two nephews, Sir Kenneth and Captain Brakspear, Miss Curzon, Miss Grace Curzon. I want you all to be great friends, and you"—turning to Marion—"will do what you can to make it lively for them, we are so quiet here, you know," said the plump little lady of the Rectory as the girls advanced across the lawn some days later.

Two long, lithe bodies disengaged themselves from two lounging chairs and stood up in the likeness of two men.

They bowed to the girls, and the first rivet was forged, as Harold would have said.

Marion looked bewitchingly pretty in a dainty cream muslin trimmed with blue and a large hat to match. It had come that morning from the dressmaker, and she wore it without a backward glance at the increasing pile of bills on the side table.

"Mother, he has £8,000 a year so I hear; it will be all right," she had said.

Grace was in pale green—also a charming costume—one of Marion's that had been shortened somewhat in the skirt to exactly fit its present occupier.

Sir Kenneth looked admiringly from one girl to the other.

There certainly was an unutterable distance between them and the two dull, pasty-faced women who claimed him as cousin.

Marion took the initiative at once and took possession of Sir Kenneth with a promptitude that caused the rector's wife to smile a little. She exerted herself to her utmost, and her bright glances and witty sallies called forth more than one glance of admiration from the sleepy brown eyes of her listener.

Grace fell to the lot of the gallant Captain, who being young had not yet got over the stage of using the personal pronoun a good deal in his conversation. But he was a good looking youth, and Grace, seeing Marion making such



"Who'd be fool enough to marry you?" cried Harold.

good headway was content to drift into a desultory conversation with Richard.

"First impressions are always good," said Marion, as she unbound her hair that night, "and I think we did very well. I found him a delightful companion, with such nice ideas about things—only once or twice he said something about women which I did not like much—I wonder if his aunt has told him about the others—?"

"What, Stanley and George and those?" queried Grace.

Marion nodded.

"N'no, I should not think so, you see they are all gone away from here now, and she seemed quite pleased that you should talk to Sir Kenneth."

Marion looked wise.

"Ah! but women are so funny. I don't think she ever quite forgave me about that curate you know."

"Well, it was hard. You see he was very useful to her, and of course when you refused him he went away."

"The idea! I considered it impertinence on his part to imagine that I would be a curate's wife. I told him so at the time."

Grace was silent. She was trying to recall whether Captain Dick had made any such remark to her.

"And I gathered," interrupted Marion, unconsciously imitating Harold, "that he has been deceived by some woman, and that might account for the way he spoke, because he said only one kind of woman had a charm for him—the pure, innocent, gentlewoman type."

"Well, you ought to do, Marion," said her sister.

"Yes, I ought—but, of course, there are those others!" And Marion knit her smooth brow.

"My dear Herbert, there goes that girl again. Really, you know, I don't think it proper!" said the doctor's wife, as she peered through a hole in the curtain and saw Sir Kenneth and the eldest Miss Curzon ride by on horseback.

"Why trouble? We are waiting hourly for the news of their engagement. It has been going on now for several weeks, and one can see that she, at any rate, is doing all she knows," replied the doctor.

"I wish you wouldn't be so slangy, Herbert. But, really, I should like to know what Miss Miggins and the Davis's think of it. She goes out riding every morning, and is always up at the rectory, or else he is at her place. They went over (he drove her in a tandem, I heard, but I did not see her) to Exeter to the tournament there, and once or twice to the theatre, really!" And the little lady rubbed her spectacles.

"Her sister went with her, and his brother, so it was quite proper," put in her husband.

"Ah!" cried Mrs. Cook, turning round sharply, "but they rode bicycles; they were not in the same trap as the others. I shall step out as soon as I have ordered the things, and just see what Mrs. Davis does think!"

In the meantime Marion was making the running as hot as she could. There were even bets made between Harold and his bosom friends at the mill as to the possible outcome of affairs, and Grace looked on, figuratively speaking, with her mouth open.



"Let me introduce my two nephews, Sir Kenneth and Captain Brakspeare."

The only one who did not seem to take much active interest in affairs was Sir Kenneth himself. Perhaps being young, titled, and well off he was used to being run after, but he certainly did not seem discomposd in any way by the manner or behaviour of the eldest Miss Curzon.

He was always glad to see her, always ready to take her out riding, driving, boating or any other form of amusement, and that he admired her majestic type of beauty was plainly evident to everybody.

Daily Marion made herself charming and ready for conquest, nightly she cried herself to sleep with chagrin and annoyance.

"I shall have to propose myself!" she said through her set teeth one day. "What can be keeping him back? That horrid Vi laughed at me to-day and asked me if I wouldn't feel dull when Kenneth was gone! I could have killed her!"

"Oh, Marion!" cried Grace quite shocked.

"Yes, and the other night he went to Exeter to dine with friends, and I was out riding on my bicycle—I had been over to Sutton Court, and passed his trap on the way home—and it was raining hard and I was wet through, and Mrs. Cook—that horrid little woman told me yesterday that if I was not more careful about standing in the wet for over an hour I should be ill. Fancy, what impertinence! But wait," she added fiercely. "Wait till the time comes—I will show them then!"

Grace was afraid to answer. Her gentle heart was rather shocked, and her sense of propriety also when she thought of her proud irresistible sister standing for an hour in the rain on the chance of meeting any man!

"It is young Bertie Sutton's coming of age next week and they are going to have the grounds illuminated and have a band and we are all going—of course it means another gown for me, but he shall propose that night if I have to force him," she muttered as she got into bed.

"Here you are, I thought you were never coming. I have been waiting such an age," said Sir Kenneth as he stood within the ring of light where Mr. Sutton was receiving her guests on the lawn, and Marion, clad in some clinging draperies, swept majestically into view, quite half-an-hour late.

She cast a glance at him. "Have you found it very dull waiting?" she said softly.

He bent his tall figure, to reply, at the same time giving her hand the faintest pressure.

"Awfully!" Marion felt her heart bound with joy. The moment, she felt sure was approaching.

"Where is your sister?" he asked eagerly. "Has she come?"

"Oh, yes—she's with mamma somewhere. By-the-by, you seem to be very interested in Grace," a trifle jealously.

"I have reason to. I hope she is to be my sister-in-law," he replied slowly.

The fairy lights danced wildly round, and there was a surging as of water in Marion's ears. Was he proposing?

He seemed to pause as if expecting an answer of some kind, so she forced her dry lips to say:

"Is she?"

"Yes. Dick is going to ask her to marry him this evening. Poor old chap, he's awfully bitten." I wish him every luck; she is a sweet girl," was the answer.

The world settled down and the fairy lights took their proper places once more in Marion's eyesight. She gave Sir Kenneth a dangerous look from under her long eyelashes.

"I expect he will. Who could resist either of you?" she said.

He gave her hand another squeeze.

"It's awfully nice of you to say that, Dick and I are very much to each other, and I like to think my friends care for him too," he said.

But it was not of Dick or his affairs she was thinking. Conversation became broken and intermittent, and Sir Kenneth appeared preoccupied, while Marion with a discretion born of experience did not break upon his meditations. She guessed what was working in his

mind, and she left the soft seductive night, the sound of the band and the mystic colourings of the many lanterns to do the rest.

She felt almost sure of her fish now.

They were sitting on a mossy seat under a little arbour of trailing hops, and Marion was idly watching the glow from the tip of her companion's cigar.

"You are very silent," she said at last.

"Am I—I'm afraid I am awfully rude, but I can't get Dick out of my mind. I hope he will be happy!" he said very earnestly.

"Why shouldn't he—people usually are," she said.

"Well you see I—years ago, made an awful mess of things, and I have always been afraid for him."

"Ah!" she drew in her breath quickly. She dearly longed to hear what that little mystery was. Aloud she said:

"Grace will make him happy."

He turned and took her hand, looking into her blue eyes, just now very soft and gentle.

"Thank you, Marion," he said, unconsciously calling her by her christian name. The hot colour swept into the girl's cheek and she was glad the lanterns' light was too vague for him to notice it.

"Sh!" he whispered suddenly. "Here they come!"

And a moment after his brother and Grace, side by side, passed down the glade engaged in low and evidently very interesting conversation.

Sir Kenneth gave a deep sigh.

"He has won," he said. "Let us go and listen to the band a bit. Don't you find it rather chilly here?"

Miss Curzon said no, she felt perfectly warm; but seeing he was evidently anxious to quit the sentimental gloom of the arbour, she concealed her chagrin and followed him to where

the lights were banked up in hundreds and the band was playing.

"Have you seen a programme?" she said, to her companion.

"No, I did not know they had any."

"Oh, yes, there is one. There is a tenor engaged to sing, and some girl from a theatre in London also is a wonderful dancer; Bertie saw her last year, and has had her down at great expense to dance to us. I expect it will be rather interesting."

"I don't. Those performances are generally over-rated, I think," he said in a cold, indifferent voice; and Marion felt instinctively that she had said the wrong thing.



Marion felt her arm grasped in a tight grasp.

Just then the band struck up a dashing air, and out on the platform sprang a small woman with black eyes, and a yellow skirt reaching, perhaps, to her knees. She sang in a coarse strident voice about how "Her Johnnie didn't know her now," and then executed a series of evolutions with her skirts, giving her audience an ample view of the lace and muslin beneath.

Marion felt her arm grasped in a tight grasp, and heard a hoarse voice say:

"Come away, for Heaven's sake! Don't look at it!"

She went, wondering slightly. Everybody else seemed either delighted or shocked by Nina Forsythe's efforts at amusement, and Bertie Sutton himself handed her a magnificent bouquet of roses at the conclusion of her "turn."

Miss Curzon glanced at her companion. His face was very white.

"Don't you feel well?" she said, laying her hand on his arm.

He shook himself.

"I'm all right," he said in rather an odd voice. "But that gave me rather a shock."

"Did it?"

"Yes—one doesn't expect to find those people in a place like this," he said, bitterly.

Marion meanwhile led him unconsciously back to the arbour where the two great lanterns in the shape of crimson fishes were swinging gently in the night air.

Had he been able to see he would have seen Miss Curzon's mouth set in a firm straight line that betokened resolution.

But he never even looked at her.

At first she tried to interest him in conversation, but found it up-hill work. Then she tried the more subtle and dangerous course of little half-uttered speeches and long glances, but Sir Kenneth was very dull and did not take the bait at all.

Suddenly he was awakened from his lethargy by feeling his hand seized in a hot firm grasp and seeing a white face with sparkling eyes close to him.

For a moment he was dazed at the suddenness of the onslaught, and then it dawned upon him that Marion was telling him in passionate language that she loved him and him alone!

To say he was amazed would have been to put it mildly.

Her white desperate face and flaming eyes quite took his breath away.

He tried to rise but she was leaning heavily on his arm.

"Oh Kenneth, if you only knew what I have suffered all this time, don't turn away—don't tell me after all I have done and am doing, don't tell me that you do not love me!" she cried passionately.

He found himself wondering how he had ever even thought her pretty!

"Really," he stammered. "I'm awfully sorry—can't make out how I led you to think my intentions—"

She interrupted him by flinging her white, bare arm round his neck. She felt, with an awful sickening feeling, that she was playing a losing game.

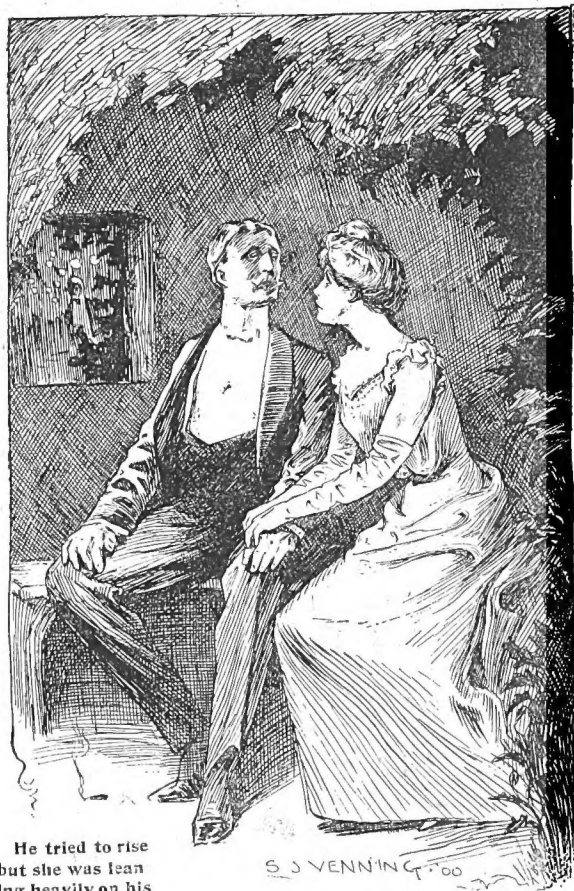
And the two red fishes seemed to nod to each other and gloat over her discomfiture with their staring eyes.

Brakspeare stood up. He felt the present crisis needed dealing with promptly.

"My dear Miss Curzon, you overwhelm me with shame to think my behaviour towards you should have led you to think for one moment that I had any aspirations to your hand."

She rose also, her face flaming.

"Then have you been playing with me all this time? Amusing yourself at my expense? Causing my name to be handed about all over the county, and so ruining my chance of ever—by Heaven, Sir Kenneth, you shall



He tried to rise but she was leaning heavily on his arm.

not! You shall not treat me like this. You must marry me now; you must, and you shall!"

She faced him with the face of a Medusa.

Kenneth saw also that she was becoming hysterical, and the ominous fishes danced wildly together in the breeze. He took her hands.

"Be calm, Miss Curzon," he said, kindly, as he made her sit down again.

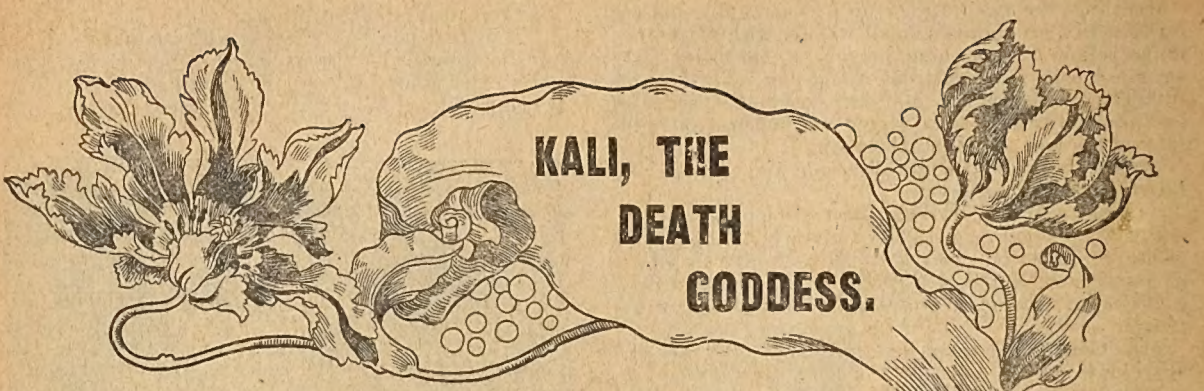
"Be calm! If it is so that I, in the genuine pleasure I took in your society, have caused you to be spoken of lightly, believe me, as a gentleman, I would offer you my hand and name instantly. But it is impossible!"

"It is not impossible. Oh, Kenneth, say you will marry me—I love you so—I do! Why can't you marry me?" she cried, taking heart again at his words.

"For the best of all reasons," he replied, between his set teeth. "I am married already. Nina Forsythe is my wife!"

And then the scarlet fishes faded altogether from the vision of the eldest Miss Curzon.

ERROLL STANHOPE.



KALI, THE DEATH GODDESS.

THE little hill village of Begra, as everyone is aware, is a small military station midway between Naince Tol, in the Oude and Khatmandoo in the Nepaul.

It was there that I met Cyril Vere, a captain in the Punjaub Infantry and with him, undertook one of the rashest expeditions it has ever been my fortune to enter upon.

Tall, handsome almost to beauty, Cyril Vere was counted a lucky man in Begra, where his good looks, wealth, the possession of a simple iron cross "for valour," and his rich baritone voice, carried the day with the European ladies.

"Tristram," he exclaimed one evening, as he and I sat together in his bungalow, "I have decided to go on a somewhat peculiar expedition. Care to come?"

"Tigers?" I queried tentatively.

"No!" he replied laughing, selecting an havana from a box which lay open beside him, on the table. "I'm sick to death of the brutes. The mess dared me to-night to do what I am about to do, and frankly Tris, I should be obliged for your help in this business."

"And what is it?"

"Didn't you hear what Chrichton said?—Oh, of course you were not at mess to-night. With the Stavens for tea, weren't you, this afternoon? Lucky dog, no wonder you miss our feed. Wish I had the chance," he cried gaily. "Well, the fact of the matter is, that I am going to Thum. Mungr, my badahur, is going to act as guide——"

"Thum?" I echoed. "What the deuce do you want to climb higher up these fiendish Himalayas for?"

"Well, you see," he replied merrily. "I've staked five hundred pounds, that I would pay a visit to the goddess Kali."

"Are you crazy, Cy?" I cried, starting from my chair. "Are you aware what your fate will be, if those cursed fanatics catch you in their fane?"

"Kill me as a peace offering to their deity," he replied, cutting the end off his cigar, then he added thoughtfully, "But you see they won't get hold of me."

I paced the room nervously. Knowing Indian affairs better than Cyril did, I was able to appreciate the risk he was about to incur to a nicety.

"I suppose you'll come, old man," he remarked tentatively, looking up, "or is the adventure too spicy a one to tempt you?"

"Oh, I'm not afraid, if that is what you mean," I replied shortly, "but mind, Cyril, you are an ass to attempt it?"

"Thanks awfully! Are you ready?" he queried, rising.

"Ready," I echoed, "for what?"

"To see the Divinity."

"To-night," I gasped, "are you going to-night?"

"Your perception is excellent," he replied gaily. "Thum is only two thousand feet above the plains, and from here it's only a couple of hours' walk. It's nine now, so we ought to get there by midnight. I expect Mungr every moment."

The words had barely left his lips, before the being in question entered, and with a low salaam enquired:

"Are the sahibs ready?"

"Perfectly," replied Cyril, as going to an escritoire he took a revolver from a drawer and examined its charges.

"Are you T.K.M.?"

I nodded surlily, the expedition did not appear very seductive to me.

"Is the sahib armed?" enquired the Nepaulese servant, addressing me.

"I am," I replied. "You anticipate the necessity of using weapons?"

"I am the sahib's servant," he replied evasively, "I obey, and know nothing!"

"Have you a rope?" queried Cyril.

"Yes, sahib, one of sixty fathoms, and a torch."

"Good," replied my chum, then turning up his collar, and striding on to the verandah, was lost in the gloom of night.

We followed, I soon imitating his example, in turning up my collar.

If Begra was hot in the day, it was, like most hill stations, chilly in the evenings.

For two hours we walked on in silence, till Mungr stopped in front of a large stone temple, almost concealed from view by weeds, and low growing bushes, and placing his finger to his lips, conjured us not to utter a sound.

"Be as silent as though death had set his seal upon your lips, sahibs," he whispered impressively. "For ere many minutes have elapsed, you will be in the presence of Kali, the destroyer of men!"

He shuddered, bowing low, almost to the ground, as though to propitiate the deity he feared, then cautiously pushing his way with furtive tread, through the

over-hanging shrubs, he reached the portal of the fane.

He paused for a second ere attempting to push open the rolling teak wood door, then he flung it from him, the rusty hinges screeching weirdly as the massive portal swung inwards.

We remained stationary in fear, straining our ears to catch any sound which would prove that the hinges had given the alarm of our proximity to the villagers of Thum.

Silence, broken only by the strident cry of a distant night bird, reassuring us on that score, we entered.

Mungr whispered prayers to Buddah between his chattering teeth, as he lighted his torch. Cyril remained grimly silent, whilst I, despite all my endeavours to the contrary, shivered like an aspen.

A mouldy odour as of an opened tomb greeted my nostrils as I walked along the gloomy fane, hordes of rats startled by our advent scurried across the flagged floor to their holes, then a silence awful in its intensity, reigned supreme.

By dint of alternate blowing and coaxing. Mungr induced his torch to blaze merrily, my courage returning somewhat when the Nepaulese's brand illumined our surroundings with its lurid glow, dispelling the shadows and displaying the whitewashed walls of a temple, carved out of a mountainous side for the most part.

"Come, sahibs," cried the Nepaulese, "follow me, and now may Buddha preserve us!"

We followed him for some distance along the temple, our steps echoing eerily through the myriad arches of the fane, till our guide stopped in front of a gigantic stone, having a ring on its upper surface, and, fixing his spluttering torch in a crack between two flags, cried hoarse y:

"Your help, sahibs. The stone is heavy."

We lent him a hand, and raising the flag, saw a yawning aperture before us, impenetrable darkness veiling its profundity.

"This is the hole you told me about, eh, Mungr? The one leading to the lower temple," exclaimed Cyril, peering down into the depths. "There are no steps, you say?"

"No, sahib, this rope must answer their purpose."

"Go down hand over hand! How jolly! How deep is it?" Cyril queried. "Thirty feet?"

"A hundred and sixty feet, sahib! Do not fear, the rope is sixty fathoms, therefore we have twenty feet to the good! Will you descend first to the house of Kali?" queried the Nepaulese, securing one end of the rope to an adjacent pillar.

"Yes," replied Cyril shortly.

Mungr approached him and tying the rope beneath his arm-pits, announced that he was ready to lower him into the depths beneath.

Cyril let himself over the edge, and catching hold of one of the sides of the aperture, said gaily:

"Say, Tris, old chap, wouldn't it be lively if I dropped into the arms of an expectant priest, eh? Slack away, Mungr."

Yard by yard the sturdy Nepaulese paid out the rope till the strain on his arms relaxed, then hauling up the rope he let me down, carrying the torch.

"I will keep guard, sahib," he whispered as I dropped over the edge. "Be quick and return ere dawns the light of day."

I closed my eyes during the descent, till Cyril's cheery voice announced, at the same time as did the slackening rope, that I was at the end of my journey.

Raising the torch I held high above my head, I was able to note my surroundings.

We were in a natural cavern, the walls of which were hewn out roughly in the shape of pillars. The rocky ceiling was lost to view in impenetrable gloom, as was the furthest end of the cave.

Before us rose a rude rock-hewn altar, from behind which loomed the outline of a gigantic idol, some sixty feet in height.

It was the roughly carved figure of a seated woman, naked to the waist. Its face revolting in its hideousness, was rendered more repulsive by its protruding fangs being dyed a deep blood crimson, the brow and cheeks being liberally smeared with red and yellow ochre, as were its abnormally long arms, which rested on its knees. A string of small bones and dried lizards, depended from its neck, reaching to the breasts of this terrible idol, the nipples of which were represented by sharp steel spikes.

Such was Kali, the Goddess of Death, as seen only by the priests and the victims doomed to be immolated in her honour.

"She is not beautiful," exclaimed Cyril, after surveying the idol for some short while.

"It is a stupendous piece of sculpture," I replied, "but come, let us go back now we've seen it. Any moment we may be discovered, and I am not anxious to have Thum about my ears like a hornet's nest."

"Neither am I, dear boy, only none of the fellows at Begra would believe I'd been in the temple, unless I carried off some trophy," he cried gaily, "therefore I mean to sneak a bone or two off her necklace."

"Don't act the fool, Cyril," I retorted irritably, "there is not a man of 'Ours,' who would doubt your word, and every moment is precious."

"All right," he replied laughingly, "It's only a thirty foot climb, and then we'll trot! I shan't be five minutes."

Before I could answer, he had approached the gigantic idol and commenced to clamber up. It was a comparatively easy task, the creases in the idol's skirt affording facile footholds, therefore ere many moments had passed, he stood flushed and excited on one of the hands, of the Goddess of Death.

"Rather hot work that climb!" he cried mopping his brow with his handkerchief, "but the worst is yet to come, but—"

The sentence for ever remained unfinished, a wild cry of terror which reverberated throughout the temple, replaced the last word, then the loud rumble of machinery awoke the echoes of the fane.

I glanced upwards in fright, to see Cyril in the grip of the idol's hands. Foot by foot he was lifted upwards, struggling frantically to release himself from the figure's retentive grasp.

As a flash of light his fate dawned on me, it must have been the same with him, for a wild piercing shriek of anguish burst from his lips, a shriek which died away in a palsied moan of bitterest agony, as the idol's arms pressed him to its breast, the iron nipple transfixing the wretched man from chest to back.

For a moment it stayed thus, then the mighty arms relaxing, allowed the mangled form they held to fall with a dull thud to the pavement.

Horrorstruck by the grim tragedy which had just been enacted, I approached the mutilated form of Cyril to see if he were quite dead. One look at the starting eyeballs, betraying the intensity of his death agony sufficed, then losing nerve, I let the blazing, resinous

torch fall on the body, and fled from the corpse towards the rope, I dimly saw in the distance.

A lurid glare lit up the fane causing me to turn even as I had my hand on the rope.

The brand had set the clothes of Cyril on fire.

I was about to return to extinguish it, when the glare enabled me to discern the outlines of some white robed priests enter the cavern.

A wild yell showed that they had perceived me.

"Pull up, for heaven's sake, Mungr," I yelled, emptying the barrels of my revolver amid the oncoming priests.

To my horror the rope remained slack, the running priests were only forty feet away.

Holding my revolver between my teeth, I commenced to climb wildly upwards. Luckily I was a good slack rope climber, and fear made me shin up the rope quicker than I had ever deemed it possible.

I had fourteen feet start when the first priest reached the rope; with a cry of anger he commenced to climb after me.

Merciful Heaven shall I ever forget the agony of that hundred and sixty foot climb, my muscles seemed bursting, yet I stuck gamely to it, and so did the priest.

In the first sixty feet I gained twenty on the priest, at a hundred he had gained twenty-one on me. I remember I felt a savage joy possess me, as for a single moment I noted that the white vestments of a priest in passing the flaming corpse of Cyril, catch fire and blaze merrily. That glance downwards nearly cost me my life, a giddiness seized hold of me, and ere I recovered my self possession the priest had gained four feet on me.

But eight feet now separated me from my pursuer.

Nerved by despair I climbed frenziedly upwards, but thirty feet separated me from the trap when I heard the welcome voice of Mungr.

"Climb sahib! climb! He gains on you!"

Once more I spurted upwards, my arms almost refusing to bear me.

Ten feet more to safety, and I could hear the hard breathing of the pursuing priest beneath me, could feel his hand touch my heel. What thews and muscles of iron he had.

"Now for it sahib!" cried Mungr. "I daren't fire, the report would bring Thum on us."

Blindly I obeyed him, till I felt his strong hand seize my collar.

"Let go," he cried commandingly, raising his sabre above his head.

I obeyed him, and as I relaxed my hold, the weapon came down with a ringing thud on the stone, severing the rope in its passage.

A loud shriek burst from the lips of the priest, as clutching the empty air, he fell with a sickening thud on the pavement beneath.

"I was on guard at the door," Mungr said apologetically, as he lifted me into safety, "and only heard the report of fire arms. Where is Vere sahib?"

"Dead," I replied shortly.

"Dead?" he echoed, "then let us guard the living. Sahib, we must run now for our lives!"

I needed no urging, and together we tore out of the temple through the shrubs and out on to the mountain road, not a moment too soon either, for Thum had received the alarm, and turned out *en masse* to avenge their desecrated temple.

A shout of triumph greeted our appearance, but having some five hundred yards start, we pegged it like path racers.

They had waited for us at the further door of the temple, leaving the one choked up by bushes, totally unguarded. Had it not been for this omission I should not have been here to-day to tell the tale.

Loading my revolver as I ran, I managed to keep the same distance between the pursuing villagers and ourselves, though the pace was killing as was plainly manifested by Mungr's laboured breathing.

For three quarters of an hour we continued thus, till the roofs of Begra coming into view, in the dim light of dawn, I fired three barrels of my revolver in the air, not daring to lose ground by aiming at the pursuing hordes of infuriated villagers.

The noise of the shooting brought out the little garrison of Begra.

Like madmen Mungr and I tore through the amazed soldiers, I shouting as I ran:

"Fire on that rabble."

In an instant my men fell into line, and received the oncoming villagers with a brisk well directed volley, which, cooling their ardour, sent them howling up the mountain towards Thum, then I fainted away.

The affair nearly provoked a religious revolt, which luckily was suppressed before it came to a head, by the ring-leaders being hanged.

The British government censured me for my part in the affair, and not deeming my life safe in India after the little episode, intimated that I had better exchange into a home-coming regiment,—which I did.

TRISTAM K. MONCKE.





Mr. Bowser's

Tribulations.

2.—A "PROFESSIONAL" GIVES SOME ADVICE ABOUT MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT.

THERE was a sort of three-fold, back-action, double-combination look on Mr. Bowser's face as he entered the house the other evening, and for the life of her Mrs. Bowser couldn't make out whether he had fallen heir to a fortune or decided to put up as candidate for the County Council. In this situation she wisely held her peace, and asked no questions even when she discovered that he had brought home a package. He vouchsafed no information, but during the dinner hour was pre-occupied and exultant by turns. When they had adjourned to the drawing-room he was ready to explain, and he softly began:

"Mrs. Bowser, with your permission I want to try a little experiment this evening."

"Is it connected with that package you brought home?" she cautiously asked.

"Somewhat. You know how my shoulders have pained me of late? There are mornings when I can scarcely raise my hand to button my collar. I haven't said much to you about it, but——"

"I never heard you complain of your back and shoulders," she interrupted. "Only last night you wanted to move the furniture in our bedroom about, and you said you felt like turning somersaults."

"If I haven't complained," he continued, as he preserved his good nature, "it was because I didn't care to worry you. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Bowser—a matter of medical fact—I

am what is called shoulderbound. That is, rheumatism has seized upon and contracted my muscles, and if something is not done paralysis will eventually overtake me. If I get a stroke of paralysis you will become a widow."

"And you must stand on your head or climb up the side of the house to ward it off."

"No, ma'am. The remedy is very simple. Half-an-hour's work for a few evenings will fix me all right. I met a professional athlete to-day, and, after examining my condition, he told me just what to do. However, if you have the slightest objection—if you want to see me become a victim of the dread paralysis——"

"What did he tell you to do?" she asked.

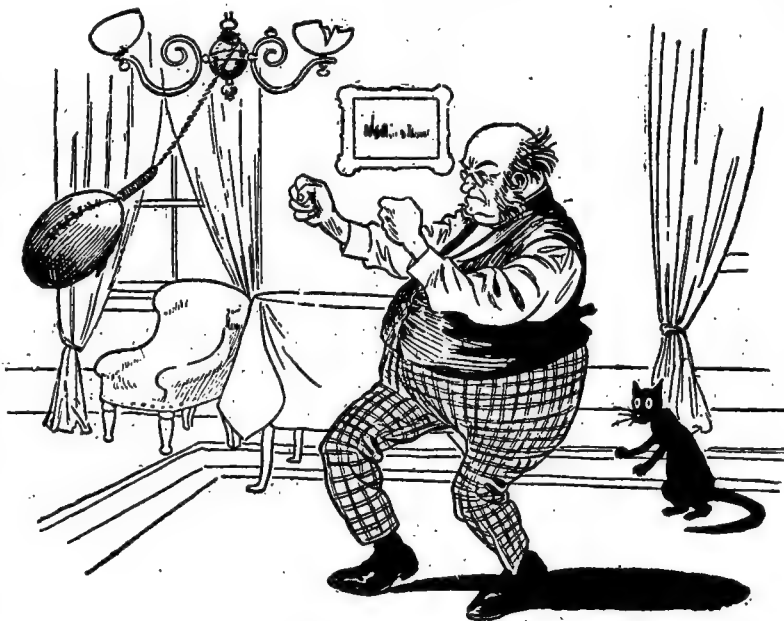
Mr. Bowser went to the hall and got his package and returned with it, and held it up and replied:

"Simplest thing in the world. It is called a punching-bag. You inflate it and hang it up and punch it. The

exercise benefits every muscle in the back and shoulders. It only cost ten-and-six, and I'll get one hundred pounds' worth of good out of it. It would also be a good thing for you to practice on. If you don't object I will inflate it and hang it up and pound it a little this evening."

"Well, go ahead," she sighed; "but don't blame me."

"Blame you about what? How can I blame you? What can happen? I simply hang the bag on the



"I piff! bang! with my left."

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chandelier, remove my coat and punch it. Nothing can be more simple. You don't expect I'm going to knock the house down, do you?"

Mrs. Bowser relapsed into silence, while he went on with the inflating. When the bag was ready he hung it up on the chandelier and removed his coat. He had carried his point without much opposition and was bland over it.

"Now then," he said, as he rubbed the palms of his hands and made ready, "you watch how I do it. It is the greatest exercise in the world. It is warranted to cure dyspepsia, indigestion, flatulency, rheumatism, lumbago, neuralgia and so forth, and to straighten up the spine and give a man a military carriage. It is practised in every college and school in the land, and there are few homes without their punching bags. You see I stand this way—and I reach out this way—and I biff! bang! with my left——"

The biff! bang! was a "swat" which would have burst the panel of a door. The ball shot away and upwards as if fired from a cannon, and about half the glass ornaments of the chandelier came rattling down on the floor. Mrs. Bowser cried out in alarm and made a rush for the dining-room, but Mr. Bowser laughed and reassured her, and added:

"I suppose I overdid it a little for the first blow. I'll just make a rat-tat-tat of it."

He played with the ball for about a minute, and the rest of the trimmings and two of the globes came raining down. The other globes would have followed had not Mrs. Bowser uttered words of vigorous protest. With the perspiration running down his face he paused to reply:

"Never mind a few pence damages. This is great work. I'm feeling a movement of muscles which have been dormant for months. Perhaps you'd better go up stairs and avoid the racket, and I'll fix the bag to a hook on the ceiling."

Mrs. Bowser promptly disappeared, and he got the stepladder and fixed a hook into the ceiling from which the ball was suspended.

When he squared off before it again he was alone and untrammelled, and he meant to knock "seven bells" out of something. The bag had a long play, and as he hauled off on it there was a crash against the ceiling, and a rebound that made him see stars.

In coming back the bag struck him fair in the face, and for a minute he looked round to see the horse which had kicked him.

"I'm on to that little curve," he muttered, as he got

ready for the next round. "I remember now the professional told me the object was to punch and dodge, the same as if boxing with a man. Well, here goes."

Mr. Bowser had never studied the conclusive tactics of the punching ball. Mrs. Bowser who was waiting at the head of the stairs for a calamity, heard him thump and grunt four or five times, and then began to dance about. About a minute later there was a crash and she called down:

"Have you knocked a side out of the house, Mr. Bowser?"

Mr. Bowser hadn't. In his dodging about he had encountered a chair and fallen over it, and had come down so heavily that a referee would have counted him out. It was a long minute before he got up, and then his good nature had departed. No punching bag ever made by mortal man could knock him about with impunity. He rose up with a determination to collapse that bag with one awful blow. He had been warned to go easy, but his outraged dignity demanded revenge.

Mrs. Bowser heard him tapping the bag with his left to get it in motion, and then she heard him draw a long breath like a horse going up hill as he hauled off to deliver the knock-out blow with his right. As he jumped in to deliver the blow he had to dodge the bag, and there was a thump against the wall which rattled things clear to the garret, followed by a howl, a stagger and a fall. She got downstairs in a twinkling, and found Mr. Bowser lying across the foot of the sofa, with the bag playing pendulum above him. His awful blow had missed it and landed on the wall, and his good right hand

was already puffing up to beat a cabbage head.

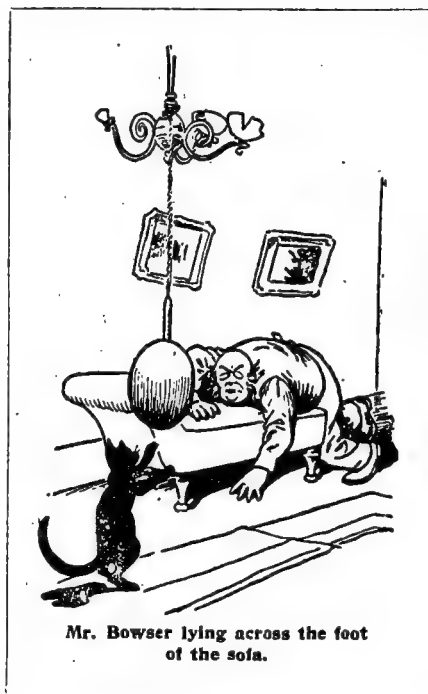
"What—what has happened?" she asked as she thought of arnica and bandages and slings.

Mr. Bowser struggled up like a stricken ox, and he looked from his broken knuckles to the dent in the wall—from the swinging bag to Mrs. Bowser and up to the despoiled chandelier. She was prepared for a furious outburst, but none came. After a long minute he quietly but sternly said:

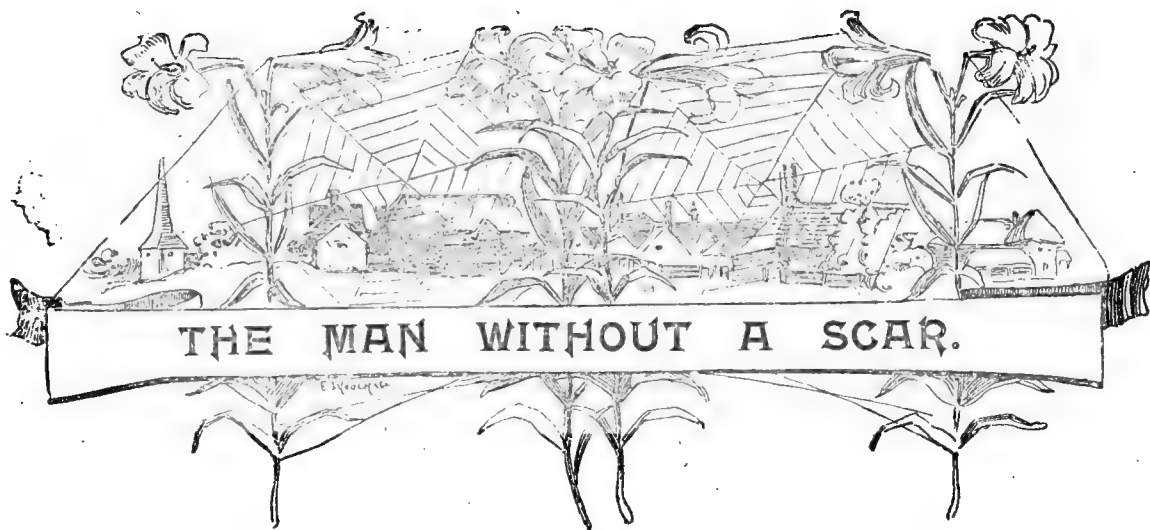
"Woman, return to your room! In the morning all will be settled. You were against me, and you crept downstairs and struck me with a chair; but our solicitors will settle all that, and you can start for your mother's by the afternoon train. No more, woman—not another word! You have failed again, but this is the last time—the last time, and good-night to you—good-night!"

M. QUAD.

NEXT WEEK: He whitewashes the cellar and the usual calamity happens.



Mr. Bowser lying across the foot of the sofa.



THE MAN WITHOUT A SCAR.

"OH, Mr. Owen, I've been trying to get a talk with you for quite half an hour, but people seem to be monopolising you. That's the result of being a hero."

The young lady shook her fan in a playful manner at the lieutenant, who seemed rather abashed and disconcerted. She did not give him time to reply, but rattled on:

"So you were one of the party that stormed the heights. How nice! And of course, Lieutenant Allen is a brother officer of yours. He won the V.C. there, didn't he? And you know all about him, of course. Is he a nice young fellow? Is he popular?"

"Well," began the lieutenant hesitatingly, "he came out to India with a new draft about a year after me, and he was sent up to the front with us at once. I knew him at Sandhurst. Yes, he was—well, I suppose most people liked him, you know. I should say so. He seemed to be——"

"Well, Mr. Owen, I shall not ask you to vouch for my popularity, if that is the way you are likely to fulfil the task," returned the girl lightly. "But I am dying to hear about the charge up the hill and how Allen and all of you felt and behaved. It must be a terrible experience to hear the bullets whizzing about you and to see your men and brother officers dropping, and to wonder when your turn was coming. Ugh! Do tell me all about it!"

"But I can't tell you anything about it, Miss Redmond," said the young man desperately. "I wasn't one of the storming party, you see; I wasn't in the fight at all—I was in the hospital with fever, drinking all sorts of stuff out of bottles and quite out of reach of the bullets. That was just my luck."

It was a very sore point with the young lieutenant that he should have been lying ill with fever while his company was winning glory in a tough struggle with Indian tribesmen.

The glory of that feat of arms had spread all over India and the old country, and when he returned on leave he had been acclaimed as a hero.

People would persist in thinking that he had been one of the gallant storming party; he was continually called

upon to give an account of the whole affair, describe his feelings during the charge, and so forth. And some even confounded him with Lieutenant Allen, and asked him if he were not tremendously proud of having gained the coveted V.C.

He reviled the ill-luck which had incapacitated him just when he might have won distinction; that was bad enough, without having to suffer the martyrdom of being taken for a hero when the chance of becoming one had been denied him.

He was mercifully, though accidentally, relieved from his embarrassing position by the arrival of his hostess.

"My dear Mary, we really cannot allow you to claim so much of Mr. Owen's attention," she remonstrated with a smile. "Mr. Owen is my lion, and I wish to introduce him to a lady for the next dance but one. Mr. Owen," she continued, as she walked away with the young soldier, "I am half inclined to wish that you had received some wound during that gallant charge; if you had one arm in a sling, or a big scar across the forehead, you would—— Oh, here we are!"

And she forthwith introduced him to a charming young lady in pink.

They had not been together many seconds when Miss Rushton began talking about the eternal topic of the storming of the heights. She, too, dilated on the glory won by his company in that famous engagement and asked him the usual questions about his feelings and the manner in which the charge was accomplished.

"How proud you must be when you remember that you are one of the gallant men who have done so much to uphold the honour of the country," she said simply, yet with enthusiasm gleaming from her eyes. "I have often wished, since reading of that engagement, that I were a man so that I could wear the Queen's uniform and do battle for my country."

Once more the colour, born of vexation and disappointment, suffused the young soldier's cheeks, yet he felt less annoyed than he had done when spoken to by others.

"I was not in the fight, Miss Rushton," he replied quietly. "I have tried to explain to several of my

friends that I am not a hero, that I was ill of fever and had no share either in the work or the glory."

"How did you contract the fever?" was her next enquiry.

"In the performance of my duty in the earlier stages of the campaign. I got soaked to the skin in fording a river with a small party when out scouting; exposure laid me low and I had fever on top of a severe cold. That was not very heroic, was it?"

"There are other heroes besides those who take part in actual battle," she replied with a gravity more befitting an older woman. "There is a vast amount of unknown heroism in this world; thousands of men accomplish tasks which, although they do not attract public attention, are just as important to the success of an undertaking as those deeds which call forth cheers and whole pages of newspaper eulogy. A man who does his duty quietly, yet effectively, without the excitement that accompanies an engagement, is just as much a hero as any of those whom you regard as more fortunate. And I happen to know what reconnaissance work on the Indian frontier means to those engaged in it."

"Thank you, Miss Rushton," returned Lieutenant Owen fervently.

He was intensely grateful to this young lady in pink for the kindly words she had uttered; they cheered him and made him better able to bear the disappointment and annoyance of his position.

But he went home that night just as disconsolate as ever. People would shower honour upon him which he had not earned, and he was inclined to echo the words of his hostess about having received a wound—even if it had been a bullet through the heart.

And the worst of it was that within a week he would be in a still more ridiculous position, for a brother officer who had been wounded in the celebrated charge was expected in the town, of which he was a native.

Captain Matthews was certain to tell society that he, Owen, had taken no part in the affair, and although he himself had tried to explain this, yet those who had lionised him would forget it and think him an imposter.

Then there was that girl in pink. She had spoken kindly to him, but what chance would he have with her against the new-comer.

As the thought crossed his mind he flushed deeply; he hardly dared admit it to himself, but he was in love with that girl, and he felt that Matthews would carry her off before his very eyes.

She was the daughter of a wealthy resident; Matthews had had pretensions in that quarter before going to India, and now that he was returning covered with glory and bearing the scar of a wound, his chances must be infinitely greater.

"What is the use of my thinking about her?" groaned Owen, and he groaned again as the answer suggested itself to him.

A fortnight passed and Owen was hoping for a chance of seeing active service again in some distant part of the British Empire.

Matthews had arrived and taken the town by storm; Owen was invited to various functions, but he always had to take an obscure place, and he fancied that people were regarding him—as he had feared—as an imposter. He saw Miss Rushton at all of these assemblies, but he had no chance of getting a minute or two with her, for his wounded rival hovered constantly about her, and her father appeared to encourage him.

As to the girl herself, Owen felt that his cause with her was hopeless; at any rate, she did not seem to tire

of the Captain's attentions, and made no effort to enable Owen to enjoy her society.

A boating party had been arranged for this particular day; it was to include a lunch on an island up the river and was to be followed by a small dance in the evening. Lieutenant Owen had been invited and felt bound to accept, but he would have given a good deal to escape the ordeal.

"Of course, Matthews will take the opportunity in order to make a proposal, and he will be accepted," he growled, trying to gnaw the ends of his slight moustache. "But I suppose I must go through it. I hope there will be a scrimmage somewhere soon, so that I can volunteer and get away from England!"

All the boats but one had reached the island and their occupants had landed; that one contained Captain Matthews and Miss Rushton. Mr. Rushton was to have been present, but urgent business had kept him away, although he hoped to arrive in time for lunch. Owen noticed with mortification that Matthews was paying far more attention to his fair charge than to his rowing.

The approach to the island was rather more difficult than it seemed, for there was a quantity of rushes in the water, but just hidden under the surface, and anyone not knowing the place might get an oar entangled in them with serious results.

Most of the party were too intent upon their own business to pay heed to the belated boat, and though Owen was awaiting its arrival in order to secure it, he was too absorbed by his own feeling of vexation to think of the necessity of warning the captain.

Nobody knew how it happened; it is seldom that one can exactly tell how such accidents occur. It is highly probable that Matthews got one oar, if not both, entangled in the rushes; anyhow, to the horror of those who heard Miss Rushton's cry and turned in that direction, the boat turned over and both occupants sank.

Owen knew the place well, and he also knew that more than one person had been drowned owing to the rushes.

Then the spectators saw Lieutenant Owen make a running dive and disappear under the water. A second or two later all three forms came in sight; the men were grasping the limp body of the girl, whose arms were tightly clasped about the neck of the man with a scar on his face.

The lieutenant had gripped the boat with one hand, while with the other he was assisting the captain to support May Rushton.

A boat was hastily pushed off from the island by two men of the party, and in less than five minutes all were safely on *terra firma*.

Miss Rushton was quickly restored to consciousness, and shortly afterwards, some fresh clothing was brought for her by two ladies who had made a hasty trip down the river for the purpose. Fresh garments had also been obtained for the two men, and it was hoped that none of the three would be any the worse for the wetting.

But the possibility of enjoying the day's outing was gone, and the party returned to the starting point in time to meet Mr. Rushton and save him a useless journey up the river.

To prevent delay he had come down in his carriage, so May was helped in preparatory to being driven home. Captain Matthews said good bye at the carriage door, and was rewarded with a smile from May and effusive thanks from Mr. Rushton.

Owen, consumed with mortification at the thought that even in her peril May had preferred Matthews—had she not thrown both her arms about his neck?—remained in the background and made no attempt to bid her farewell.

The man with the scar was bound to win.

But he was mistaken; as the captain was about to close the door, May pushed it open and smiled at Owen, who briskly stepped forward, while the Captain retired out of politeness—certainly not by choice—and left him in possession.

"How can I thank you sufficiently for your brave deed?" she said sweetly. "I have heard all about it, and if it had not been for you we should have been drowned. And yet you remain in the background and do not give me an opportunity of thanking you."

"I thought," stammered the lieutenant, blushing furiously, and quite unconscious of the significance of his words, "I thought—that is, I mean—well, you seem to prefer him, for you had your arms round him, didn't you?"

"I clutched at the first one for safety," stammered May in her turn. "It wasn't because—I always thought you were a hero, even though you were not one of the storming party!"

"And the man with the scar——?" enquired Owen, bending forward eagerly.

"Must be content with the scar and the glory!" returned May, with downcast eyes. "I am sure that my father will be pleased to see you when you can find time to call on us, and thank you for what you have done."

And then Lieutenant Owen shut the carriage door, feeling as though he was standing on his head; and the carriage drove off with its occupants—Mr. Rushton looking very much shocked at this open love-making, and May's face beaming with a happy smile.

W. STRONG.

MISTRESS (angrily): "See, Bridget, I can write my name in the dust on this mantelpiece."

Bridget (admiringly): "There's nothing like eddication after all, is there, mum?"

MOTHER: "Georgie, I told you to say 'No' if they offered you cake a third time."

Georgie: "So I did, Mamma. Only they offered it to me the fourth time, and you didn't say anything about the fourth time."

THINMAN: "What do you think of the bicycle craze?"

Fatman: "Great thing. I never took so much exercise before in all my life."

"Why, I didn't know you were riding."

"I am not, but my wife is trying to, and I have to see that she doesn't fall off."

"You don't care for a big house and lots of servants do you?" he asked.

"Not at all," she replied promptly.

"Don't you think that love in a flat would be delightful?" he persisted.

"Yes," she answered. "Love in a flat, but not life with one."

He postponed his proposal.

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THE NEWLY-MARRIED PAIR.

"Of course they are," said the captain decidedly. "When you have had as much experience as I have, or even half of it, you will be able to tell a newly married couple as easily as you can read a newspaper. Look at her grey veil! That settles it at once. Going to Jersey for the honeymoon."

The captain of the South Western Steamer nodded his head knowingly to the young man with whom he was conversing, and then looked once more in the direction of the couple to whom he was referring.

"Oh, so the grey veil is the usual thing? Well, captain, you have been married and ought to know. I haven't entered the bonds yet," said Ralph Alston.

"Bless you, I've seen lots of them crossing on these boats," continued the captain. "Don't know that I should care about Jersey for a honeymoon trip, but probably that's because I know the place so well. Ever been there before?"

"No," returned Ralph. "Going over for a fortnight, don't propose to stop at Jersey all the time. I want to see Guernsey!"

The conversation ended at that point and Alston turned his attention to the happy pair.

They didn't appear to be over affectionate; he had always understood that when people were on their honeymoon they made themselves ridiculous by "spooning," but these seemed to be very sensible—too sensible, in fact.

Ralph Alston joined a group of passengers whose acquaintance he had made during the railway journey from London and was soon engaged in conversation. He forgot the married pair for an hour or two, and when they recurred to his mind he looked about for them.

The weather was now becoming rough and the steamer tossed about in the chops of the Channel.

Studying himself by a rail, he turned about in search of the strangers. Somehow, that little woman interested him.

What a strange thing it is that a little woman generally chooses a great, burly man for a husband! Ah, he could see her aft, and she was alone.

"Not a bit like the ordinary run of people," mused Alston, "or he wouldn't have left her all alone on deck in this rough sea. But perhaps he is sea-sick and she is a good sailor."

Yet Ralph Alston felt indignant at the idea of a man leaving his bride alone on deck, even though he were ill; it never occurred to him to be indignant with her for not attending to her indisposed bridegroom.

Then he saw her rise from her chair and endeavour to make her way along the deck, it was a difficult task and he went to her assistance as quickly as he could.

"The brute!" he muttered. "Why couldn't he come and help her?"

He gallantly proffered assistance, which was accepted with a smile of gratitude.

He helped her below, and in the smoking-room he saw the husband, which sight naturally increased his indignation against the "brute."

"So he isn't ill at all!" murmured Alston to himself. And he uttered the words more audibly and more savagely as he ascended to the deck once more.

The man's name was Bridge, so much Alston learnt before they arrived at St. Helier. He did not see them during the remainder of the sea trip, but he was pleasantly surprised to meet them at dinner the next day in the same hotel. There were three of them now, the third member of the party being a lady—a friend who was staying in Jersey, Ralph supposed.

Alston bowed to Mrs. Bridge and received a bow and smile in return, but no words passed between them.

Ralph would much have liked to join the party, and was thinking very seriously of devising some scheme for accomplishing this object, when he remembered that his desire was prompted by a feeling of admiration for Mrs. Bridge, and he at once resolved to transfer himself and his belongings to another part of the island. It was not gentlemanly to be courting the society of a married lady.

But fate seemed determined to throw them in each other's way.

He met them at Mont Orgueil and St. Brelade; but, although he resolved to carry out his intention to visit Guernsey, which, he admitted to himself, was the best way to get out of their society, yet he hesitated. He grew indignant with himself, but he seemed powerless to leave the island; the vision of that sweet face and the kissable mouth haunted him persistently.

Towards the end of the first week he was in Georgetown. He entered the Post Office, and as he did so he nearly collided with a feminine figure. It was Mrs. Bridge.

"You are not gone to—to Mont Orgueil?" stammered Alston lamely, after the usual greeting had passed. Whatever made him ask that question he hadn't the slightest idea; as soon as he had uttered it, he flushed at his own foolishness and wished himself on the Caskets, or at the bottom of the sea—anywhere out of her sight.

"No," was the lady's reply in a tone which showed just a little surprise. "I didn't feel like it to-day, so they went alone. We were there the other day, you know. Did Mr. Bridge tell you that he was going to-day?"

"No," was the confused reply. "I suppose I guessed it."

"Really?"

And then he seemed to come back to himself, and he

had a hazy recollection that she had wished him good-bye in a peculiar manner.

He spent the greater part of that day in saying hard things about his wooden-headedness.

He went to Guernsey—and met Mrs. Bridge and her party.

He returned to Jersey by the next boat.

When he reached London at the expiration of his holiday, his friends remarked that he did not seem to be much the better for it, to which he replied that the heat had upset him. In his own heart he knew that this was not so, and that the real cause was a pretty woman married to "an elephant."

Nearly a year had passed away when Alston one day received a note from an old friend in Wales, asking him if he could not arrange to spend a few days with him.

"We shall be delighted to see you," the letter ran, "and the little ones are anxious to renew their acquaintance with 'uncle.' We shall have another visitor, and as that visitor is of the opposite sex, Jenny asks me to say that she does not think you will be lonely. I endorse that opinion; she's a charming girl, my boy."

Ralph Alston was to take his holidays early that year and this invitation just fitted in with his plans. Charlie Penton had a nice place, according to all accounts, and Alston thought that a stay among the Welsh mountains would brace him up; the atmosphere of Jersey had been rather enervating, so he thought of trying a more breezy locality.

But Penton's idea that the "charming girl" would be an extra inducement was altogether incorrect; as a matter of fact, it almost had the effect of bringing about a refusal of the invitation. Ever since he had set eyes on Mrs. Bridge, Ralph had become practically a woman hater; at least, he shunned the society of the opposite sex.

He decided at length to accept the offer and trust to luck that the charming girl would not spoil his stay.

Ralph Alston was a young man who never set out to keep an appointment or catch a train until the last possible minute and he usually had to "run for it" at the finish. Thus it happened that when he reached the proper platform at Willesden Junction he had only just time to jump into a carriage before the whistle sounded and the train began to move out of the station.

"A narrow shave, that," he muttered half aloud as he sank back into a corner. "But it is generally like that with me. All's well that ends well; I usually manage it although I do run it close. Um, a girl in the other corner; wonder who she is?"

He looked at the other occupant of the carriage out of the corner of his eye as he unfolded his paper; the young lady seemed to be attacked by a similar fit of curiosity, for she cautiously turned her eyes in his direction. So it came about that they caught each others eyes and neither could repress a smile at having been caught.

"I must really apologise for my seeming rudeness," said Ralph frankly, "but—why, we have met before."

"About ten months ago, I believe," returned the other with a light laugh. "How strange that we should meet again!"

Alston walked to the other end of the carriage and held out his hand, which responded warmly to his handshake.

Then they began talking on various subjects, but Alston became more and more constrained in his speech

and Mrs. Bridge, noticing this, became more formal in her manner.

"Left alone again!" thought Alston as his mind reverted to the scene on the steamship and the meeting at Georgetown. "That fellow is a brute! I wonder whether she really married him for love? I must confess that she doesn't look as if she were breaking her heart at his absence. I suppose the fervour wears off with some people, even in ten months, but it does seem a bit soon, and she hardly strikes me as the sort of girl who would tire in that period."

He handed her an illustrated journal, but although she took it and made a pretence of looking at it for a moment or two, she clearly had no interest in it, and soon laid it on the seat.

Alston thought he would renew the conversation by asking after her husband.

"How is Mr. Bridge?" was the form of his enquiry. "He is not with you?"

"Mr. Bridge?" Her eyes opened widely. "Why should he be with me?"

"Well," said Ralph with some hesitation, "isn't it usual for a husband to accompany his wife?"

Her eyes opened still more widely; then she lay back in her corner and laughed heartily.

"Who told you I was married?" she asked when her merriment had subsided. "And to Mr. Bridge! Why, didn't you see his wife with him? She is my cousin. But I suppose you didn't, for she is a bad sailor and keeps her cabin a'l the time. Yet you saw her in Jersey. Oh, this is too funny! What ever made you think that I was married—and to him?"

"The captain said so. He declared that he could always tell a newly married couple, and he assured me that you were on your honeymoon. Of course, I believed it—and you didn't deny it!"

"I am not aware that I was ever consulted on that point!" observed the young lady with another laugh, her cheeks colouring a little. "In fact, I do not remember that we have even been introduced to each other by name, you and I."

Ralph Alston promptly settled that matter by declaring his name and asking for hers, which proved to be Rose Barton. Then he wished to know her destination, to see how far they were travelling together; and he mentally resolved to make a change of route if necessary, so that he might have more of her society.

"I am going to some relatives of mine among the Welsh mountains," she informed him. "Mrs. Penton is related to my mother—and, I suppose, to me also."

It was Alston's turn to be astonished now, and he was most agreeably so. She was going to Charlie Penton's. So this was the "charming girl!"

It is needless to say that Alston quite shared his friends' opinion.

When the travellers arrived at their destination they found Penton with his trap awaiting the arrival of the train.

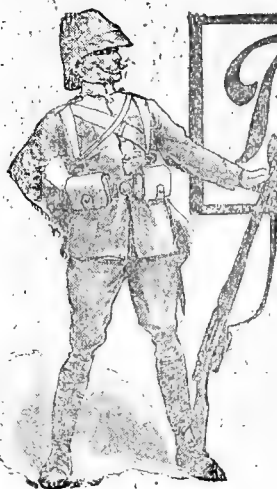
He laughed good-humouredly when he saw them together.

"Jenny said you would meet on the way," he remarked, "and she is right, as she always is. Shrewd woman, Jenny!"

Jenny made another prophecy before her visitors had been twenty-four hours under her roof; it was that "they would make a match of it."

And they did, but it must be confessed that it did not require much shrewdness to foretell that event.

E. A. WILLIAMS.



Briton or Boer?



By GEORGE GRIFFITH.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR years past Britain and the Transvaal have been spoiling for a fight, and it was left to that well-known author, Mr. George Griffith, to write this strong and exciting serial nearly four years ago graphically describing a huge war between the two countries.

The story, coming so soon after the Jameson Raid, was read with unusual interest.

Now that Briton and Boer are in deadly conflict it will be interesting to read the story, and see how far the imagination of the author has actually come true.

CHAPTER XIX.

TREASON OR RUIN?

STARTLING as the news brought by Dmitri undoubtedly was, it was by no means unexpected either by the Prince or the Princess. Both of them were infinitely better informed as to the policy and projects of the Transvaal Government and those of the leaders of the Dutch Africander conspiracy than the State Secretary or his associates had any idea of. This they had in the main gained by the simple and obvious method of using the ample funds at their disposal by taking skilful advantage of the corruption which pervaded Pretorian officialdom from the lowest almost to the highest ranks—the medium being, of course, the discreet Dmitri.

This being so, they were fully aware of the inevitable result of the pitiless policy which the Government had pursued towards the Outlander population of Johannesburg since it had finally thrown off the mask of spurious conciliation and mock humanitarianism on Independence Day at Krugersdorp. As the leader of the deputation had said at the close of the President's memorable speech, the Boers had "spoofed" them, and badly, too.

It could now be seen at a glance that every move which the President and his Government had made, from the surrender of Jameson and his fellow-raiders to the final promise of the franchise, had been part of a subtly-planned and consistently-played game to keep the foreign population of the Transvaal quiet and in good humour, and to completely deceive the outside world as to the true character and intention of the Transvaalers and their rulers.

But now the mask had been thrown off, and the Boer stood revealed both to the stranger within his gates and to the nations beyond his borders in his true character—crafty, cruel, and pitiless.

The story of the fortnight which had elapsed since the President's fatal declaration may be briefly told as follows: To describe the state of the Golden City that night as one of panic and consternation would be merely to confess the insufficiency of ordinary language. What had happened in the last days of 1895—the mad exodus of women and children, the paralysis of industry, and the temporary collapse of business,—was as nothing to the present state of affairs.

That was panic induced by the very real and by no means unfounded fear that the Boers, knowing, as they did full well, what was going to happen across the border, would take time by the forelock and crush the Reform Movement

by force of arms. But then, at least, there was hope of escape for many.

Now there was none, and in place of panic there was the stupefaction of despair, the hopeless waiting for the inevitable stroke of destruction to fall. By evening it was known that the newly-constructed forts and batteries on Hospital Hill, Rosenkopje, the heights above Fox's Reserve, and Reservoir Hill had been manned by full complements of the States Artillery, and that the Government had taken possession of the railway and telegraph systems. Lastly came the news that the Drifts were closed, and this meant that Johannesburg was practically in a state of siege, although no hostile demonstration had been made against it.

Thus the 50,000 white inhabitants of the Rand saw themselves cut off from all communication with the outside world, their enormous wealth—the wealth which they had themselves created in spite of all the Government could do to cripple their industry—at the mercy of their now declared enemies, and themselves threatened either with the nameless horrors of bombardment and assault, or the slower inhumanity of siege and starvation.

As soon as the members of the deputation returned from Krugersdorp a meeting was called at the Rand Club—a very different gathering to the one that had assembled in the same building on the previous night. It was not in any way interfered with by the authorities, and it sat far into the night discussing the difficulties and perils of a situation which might fairly be described as without parallel in modern history.

The result of its deliberations was meagre, and yet it was the only possible one. After a night of the most intense

anxiety, which, however, passed without the slightest disturbance, a deputation waited on Daniel Schutte, the Commandant of the Rand police, to request that a telegram should be sent to the Government at Pretoria, asking the



He fell into a violent rage.

a petition might be presented to the President on behalf of the inhabitants of Johannesburg. This was granted, and the deputation was taken to Pretoria under an armed guard.

The petition was to the effect that the ordinary amenities of civilised warfare should be observed with regard to those of the Outlander population who found it impossible to give their allegiance definitely to the Republic; that a safe conduct should be given to them out of the Transvaal territory; and that they should have a reasonable time given them to make such arrangements as they could with regard to their business affairs.

To this the reply of the President had been as characteristic under the circumstances as, under other conditions, his dealings with the Reform prisoners had been. He fell instantaneously into a violent rage, shaking his fist in their faces, and almost shouting:

"You people came here to make money out of the Land, and when you had made it you tried to steal the Land itself. Now when we are going to fight for the Land, where you have become rich, you want to desert it, and take money, and men, and knowledge to our enemies.

"You shall not be allowed to do it. You owe everything you have to the Land, and you shall pay your debt. But we will not be too hard on you. You shall have a week to think of it and talk, and hold your meetings, and we will not disturb you. Then you shall come back and tell me how many of you will stand by the Land which has made you rich. Now go, and when you are talking remember that this Holy Book is our guide, and that it teaches us how to deal with a perverse and stiff-necked generation."

An old leather-bound Bible was lying on the table at which the President was sitting when he received the deputation, and as he spoke these last words he rose from his seat and brought his great fist down with a resounding bang upon it. Then, with a wave of his hand towards the door, he spat on the floor, and turned his back on them.

When they took the news of their reception back to Johannesburg it was received, as it might well have been, with the gravest apprehension, mingled with bitter indignation. So far as could be seen the only alternatives before the inhabitants were becoming subjects of the Republic and devoting their lives and property to its service, or braving the piously brutal threat with which the President had answered their plea for safety and civilised treatment.

The one meant treason to the countries of their birth, and, in the case of the British citizens, taking arms against their own flag and their own countrymen; while the other meant anything that the calculating cruelty of the Boer might devise, or his ingrained savagery accomplish.

It was a desperate predicament. But as the days went quickly by, the British residents on the Rand saw clearly that it was soon to become even more desperate so far as they were concerned. Large numbers of other nationalities—mostly Jews hailing from different parts of Europe, and practically useless from a military point of view—gave in their allegiance, and made tolerable terms for themselves and their property. The majority of Germans and Frenchmen moved quietly out of the town, unhindered by the authorities, but no British subject was permitted to move, save on condition of signing the Declaration of Allegiance—which not a man, woman, or child of them would have done at any price.

By the end of the week of grace, practically the only inhabitants left in Johannesburg were those who owed allegiance to the British flag—English, Scotch, Irish, Cape Colonians, Australians, and Canadians. The others had gone, permitted by the Pretorian Government for reasons of its own to escape the fate which all now believed to be impending over the Golden City.

So far no violence had been offered either to person or property. The mines had been shut down immediately the Proclamation had become known, and all the gold in the Mine offices and banks had been taken away under strong

guards to Pretoria, where the Government issued credit notes redeemable at the end of the war.

The kafirs and coolies had been rigidly confined to their locations, and Commandant Daniel Schutte's police, armed with rifles and revolvers and carrying full bandoliers of cartridges, were posted on foot at all the principal street corners and patrolled the streets on horseback in couples.

So the last day of grace came and found the

British citizens of Johannesburg absolutely isolated from the rest of the world, without arms or ammunition, under close police surveillance, and threatened by a practically irresistible force, and yet still steadfast in their resolve not to renounce their allegiance to their country.

Escape was as hopeless as rescue. The Boers had crossed the border on the night of the 16th, and seized every British post along the border from Tuli in the north to Taung in the south. Elebi, Palapye, Schoshong, Mafeking, and Vryburg, surprised and ungarrisoned, were all in their hands within forty-eight hours of the making of the President's proclamation.

To the south lay the Free State border, and to the west the Portuguese territory, and so on all sides they were cut off. They knew too well that there were no British troops in South Africa that could come to their aid, for it was only too miserably certain that the whole available strength of the British and Colonial forces would be inadequate for the defence of the towns within the British territories.

Early on the morning of Christmas Day—that is to say the day after the expiration of the week of grace—Commandant Schutte rode at the head of a squad of mounted police to the door of the Rand Club, which had been used as the headquarters of a sort of Committee of Public Safety, which had been organised by the principal remaining residents, and demanded to know whether, as he put it, the protection of the Government was to be accepted or not, and if yes, whether the Committee was prepared to go to Pretoria and sign the Declaration on behalf of themselves and their fellow citizens.

The Committee was already sitting in anticipation of such a demand, and the Commandant was invited into the committee-room to hear its decision. He answered the invitation with a laugh, and not over-elegant jest, and told the messenger to go back and tell the chairman to come out and talk to him in the street, as he wasn't going to take the trouble to dismount for the best Red-neck in Johannesburg.

When the messenger took this arrogant summons back to the Chairman of the Committee, a tall, stalwart, fair-haired Englishman, who a week before had been a millionaire, and was now little better than a pauper, looked round at his companions, and said briefly and quietly:

"I suppose that is about all that we could have expected, but I presume that it makes no difference to our decision?"

"For my part it would make it all the stronger if that were possible," said one of the members just as quietly and just as firmly. "Don't go out to the brute. Send him his answer in writing."

"Yes, certainly, that's the thing to do, and put it straight. Let him know that he can shoot us if he can't insult us."

"Tell him to go to—Oom Paul, and begin shooting when he likes. There doesn't seem to be any other way out."



A tall Englishman looked round at his companions.

"We're in the trap, and we may as well die game."

"Tell him to remember how Englishmen and Englishwomen died at Cawnpore and Delhi, if the ignorant old buffer ever heard of them, and say we can do the same."

"You can't make him ashamed of himself, but there is no harm in trying."

"Put it straight and stiff, and shove in a quotation from the Bible if you can."

Such were the expressions which fell in quick succession from the lips of member after member of the committee. The Chairman nodded and took a sheet of notepaper and

began to write. When he had filled one side he deliberately blotted it, held it up before him, and said:

"Gentlemen, I hope this meets with your approval."

Then he read:

"To Commandant Daniel Schutte, in command of the Johannesburg Police Force.

"This is to inform you, and to request you to inform the Government of the South African Republic, that on behalf, and with the consent of, the British public now resident



They had been in consultation.

in Johannesburg, this Committee of their Representatives refuses unconditionally the terms offered by President Kruger to the Deputation which waited on him on the 17th of this month, and they are prepared to accept any consequences which this refusal may entail."

"The very thing. That's the way to talk to him," came in a chorus. "Sign it and we'll all sign it after you."

The chairman wrote his name with unfaltering hand under the few pregnant words which, as it might well be, consigned himself and several thousands of his fellow-subjects—men, women, and children—to something worse than the horrors of war, and then each member of the committee put his name down on that momentous piece of notepaper in turn. Then it was passed back to the chairman, and he gave it to the messenger, telling him to take it to the Commandant of Police.

The messenger left the room. No answer came back—only a loud, coarse laugh from the street and the clatter of hoofs as the squad rode away, and as this died away down the street towards the Goldfields Hotel, the chairman looked round and said:

"Well, gentlemen, we have taken our decision, and for the present done all that we can do."

That afternoon two men were seated in the private office of the Commandant of Police in the Court House in Church Square. One was the Commandant himself, a somewhat short, stoutly built hard-featured man with dark hair and keen grey eyes, and the other was a broad-shouldered, heavily-built man, bull-necked, and narrow of brow, with brown close-cropped hair and red bristling moustache, with the jaw of a prize-fighter, small bright blue eyes, and a broad nose of the distinctly retreussed type. This was the Chief of Police in the Potchefstroom district, a renegade Englishman named May, who had changed his name, as he had changed his allegiance, for a Dutch one, and was now known as Frederick de Witt Tossel.

They had been in earnest consultation for some time without apparently coming to any agreement on the subject they had been debating. At last Commandant Schutte brought his hand down on the table, and said:

"But, *Allemachtig, ker!* what are we to do? We can't fire on the town with all the women and children in it before they do anything! It would be murder, and all the world would call us worse than Kaffirs if we did it, for it would

come out after the war was over. And they won't do any thing. They'll stop here and starve, and that will be as bad. *Verdom!* How are we to obey our orders without behaving like Kaffirs?"

"Kaffirs! I've got it," said Tossel, leaning his arms on the table and bending over towards the Commandant and speaking in a low, hoarse tone. "It's no use going on feeding those niggers any longer. Take the guard away and let them loose. You know what they'll do. Then—we shall know what to do, for the riot will have to be put down—do you see?"

Then there came a silence, during which the two men looked into each other's eyes, and then Commandant Schutte got up with something like a sigh, and said:

"*Duivel*, it's a bad business, but it's the easiest way. God forgive us; but we'll do it."

CHAPTER XX.

THE FATE OF THE GOLDEN CITY.

WHEN Lieutenant Tossel made his infamous proposal, and Commandant Schutte accepted it—albeit, to his credit, somewhat unwillingly—they both forgot two things. The first was that the average Anglo-Saxon man, from whatever part of the world he hails, is never so bad to deal with as when he is in a very tight place, and the second was that the average Kaffir in the depths of his unsophisticated soul, hates a Boer as he hates nothing else on earth. The result of this forgetfulness was a very unpleasant surprise to both.

The Committee of Public Safety had virtually dissolved itself after giving Commandant Schutte his answer, but there was another committee of an informal sort, though of a much more practical character, which, unknown to them and to everybody else, had been considering the situation from quite another point of view ever since the night of the 17th of December. The committee consisted of four members, each of whom was a very good representative of that part of the Empire which had given him birth.

One was a tall, lean, wiry, sun-baked Australian hailing from the torrid plains of Queensland. His name was Sidney Nesbitt, and he had yet to see his thirtieth year.

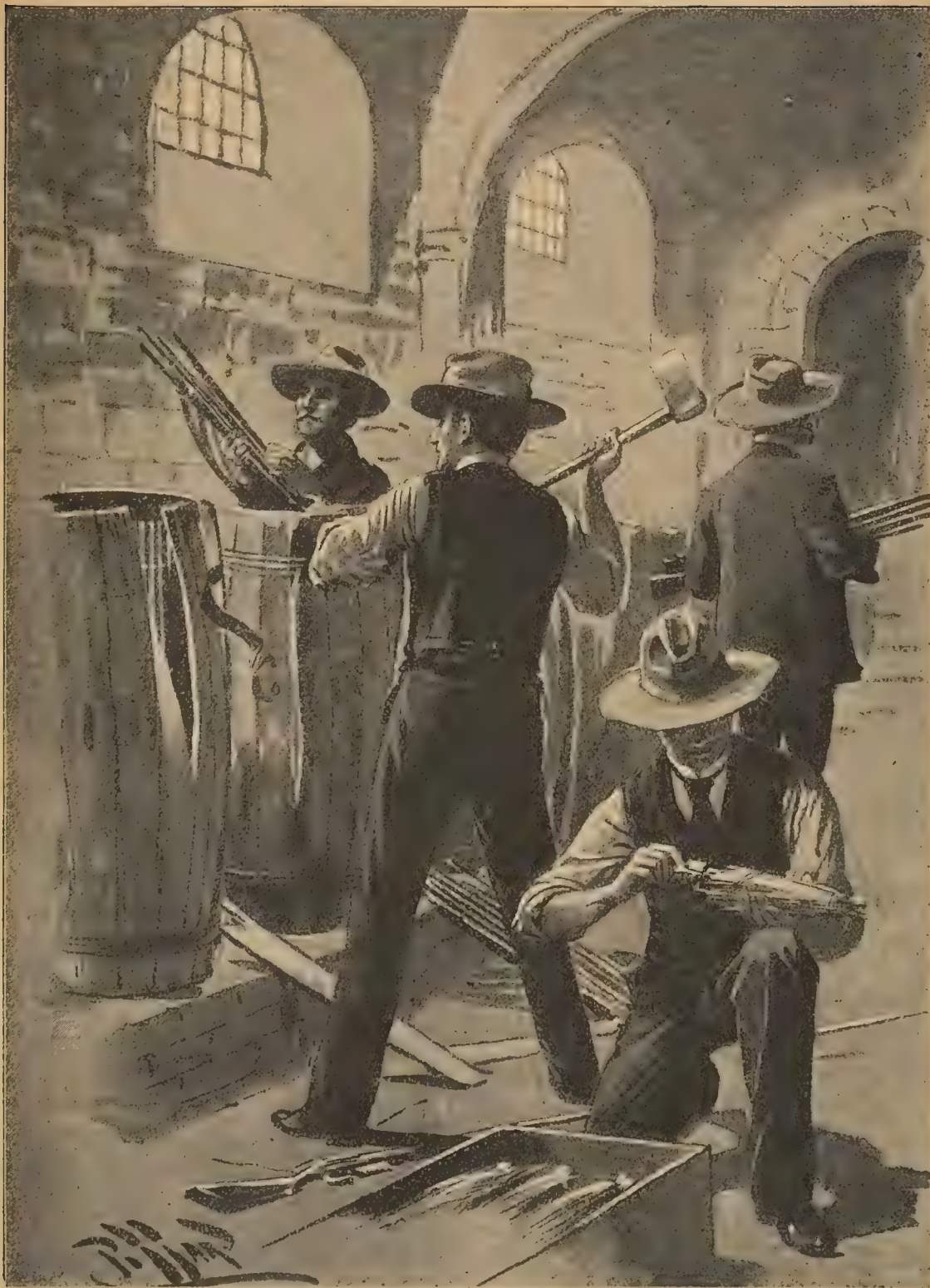
Another was a backwoodsman from the forests of British Columbia named Murray MacLure, Scotch by descent, as might be guessed from his name, a year or so on the other side of thirty, hard as iron, shrewd, and full of resource, as a man of his earlier mode of life had to be.

The third was Frank Mellish, a Natalian colonist of two generations, descended from the old sturdy English frontier stock of the Eastern settlements, which is, after all, the backbone of British strength in South Africa. He was not quite twenty-five.

The fourth was a man, well known in Johannesburg, whom I will call Tom Robertson, as that is not his name. He was an Englishman, born in the West Country some forty years before; but he was English only in birth and instincts. By education and experience he was a South African in the widest sense of the word; in fact, it would not, perhaps, be amiss to say that he knew his South Africa quite as well as Oom Paul knew his Bible—if not, perchance, a trifle better.

These four had somehow come together, as though by a sort of mutual affinity, in the rapidly-moving and sometimes troublous vortex of Johannesburg society.

While Commandant Schutte and Lieutenant Tossel were closeted together in the Commandant's room in the Court House, they were sitting in the back parlour behind a closed bar-room in Rissick Street smoking expensive cigars which could no longer be sold, and drinking whisky-and-soda by way of supper, liquor being just then both cheaper and more plentiful than food was in the Golden City. They represented all that was most desperate, and therefore most dangerous, in the beleaguered town, and they were discussing ways and means with the frank recklessness of men who were about to take their last chances in a losing game with Fate.



Casks ostensibly filled with liquor were smashed to pieces, and found full of neatly packed rifles and carbines.

"We can't stop here and starve on smoke and whisky-and-soda, you know," said Mellish, as he finished his first glass, and put it down with a smack on the table. "Something's got to be done, and that pretty quickly, too."

"Something! Yes, but what?" said Maclure. "If we had weapons we might fight our way out under cover of the dark, but then we should leave three or four thousand women and children behind us. What about them? We couldn't take them with us, could we? If we tried to they would only get shot or starved to death on the veld, and where could we take them to?"

"Charlestown's the nearest bit of English ground," said Mellish, half musingly, "but that's pretty near a hundred and twenty miles away through a country that will be swarming with Boers I suppose—and there's Amajuba at the end of the journey!"

"And they may be in Charlestown itself for all you know," said Nesbitt, "thanks to the way the Home Government has been playing the billy-goat with South Africa, while the Dutchmen were getting ready to spring this little game on us. No, it's no good thinking of getting the women and children out. That would be no better than taking them out of the frying-pan and pitching them into the fire."

"Come now, Tom," he went on, looking across the table

at Robertson, "just consider yourself in the chair at this meeting, and let's have your views on the subject. What about those rifles you were talking about so mysteriously the other day—the ones that came in during the Reform times, and never got found by the Boers. Are they really in the town, or were you only pulling our legs?"

Robertson knocked the ash off his cigar against the edge of the table, and didn't reply for a minute or two. Then he looked up and said slowly:

"Well, boys, that is not the sort of thing that I'd like to pull a man's leg about just now, so I may tell you that it was perfectly true. There are between twelve and fifteen hundred good Martinis and I should say about thirty thousand rounds of ammunition that the Boers know nothing whatever about,

and which have been in Johannesburg for a year or more. There is plenty of dynamite, too, done up in nice handy cartridges with detonators all fixed ready for throwing; but then what's the good? Before we could get the fellows armed the Zaps would be on to us, and if a shot were fired, you know as well as I do that those Germans in the forts would start and shell the town, and think it a picnic.

"If I hadn't known that I would have told you about the guns long ago. As things are, I'll be skinned if I know what to do. You see, it isn't us; it's the women and children. We could take our chance, but with them it's different. They're helpless, and that makes us helpless, too. Hullo! What's that? Good Heavens, the Kaffirs are loose. Hear 'em? Now there'll be the devil to pay, and lots of pitch hot."

As he spoke, there came from the street an undefined, shuffling, rustling noise as of the pattering of thousands of bare feet, and above it rose the fierce panting "Hau! hau! hau!" which told them that the Kaffirs were not only loose, but in desperate earnest about something.

They had all sprung to their feet at once. For a moment

or two they looked at each other in silence, then Robertson made for the door, saying: "Come on, boys. This is the chance we want. If those chaps only start a good abled-bodied riot, we'll have the guns out in no time. Out you go! They know me, and they won't hurt you. It's the Dutchmen they're after."

"Now, look here," he went on, stopping them in the passage before he opened the street door, "you must go round and get all the men you know—men who can shoot, mind; no one else is any good, and start 'em off down here sharp. I'll show 'em where the guns are as they come. We shall have to take our chance now, hit or miss, it's the only one we shall have. Ah! You hear. The Zaps are beginning to shoot. Clear out now, and get the boys down as sharp as you can. It's neck or nothing to-night with all of us. I believe those Dutchmen let the niggers out to make an excuse to shoot. Good-bye, if I don't see you again."

He opened the door and let them out, shaking each one by the hand as he went with a quick, strong grip. Then he locked the door and set about doing his share of the work.

When the others got out into the streets they found them full of dark, hurrying forms all making towards the Court House in Church Square. Each of them was stopped and threatened again and again, but a few words of English always sufficed to show the Kaffirs that they were friends and not enemies, and to convince themselves that what Robertson had said was true.

There was a good deal more danger from the bullets which the police were now firing indiscriminately down the streets as they retired before the rushes of the dusky masses; but these, too, they happily escaped, and they ran on telling every Englishman and Colonial that they met—for most of the men had turned out thinking that the last act of the tragedy had begun, and preferring to die in the open fighting, even if it was only with sticks and stones, than to be murdered helplessly in their houses—what had happened and what they were about to do.

Under such circumstances men who do not lose their heads think and act quickly, and in a wonderfully short space of time the summons had gone round, and the pick of the remaining manhood of Johannesburg was hurrying from all quarters towards Rissick Street in a sort of race to be first to get hold of the coveted rifles.

But by this time the whole town was an utter pandemonium, the scene of a hideous carnival of rage and slaughter. Tossel and Schutte had taken it for granted that the released natives would think of nothing but looting the town and emptying the liquor stores, and then turning on the unhappy residents and giving themselves up to an indescribable orgy of lust and drunkenness, during which they could bring in their men and obey the pitiless orders that had come to them from headquarters.

But the natives, to their astonishment and terror, didn't do anything of the sort. There were some thousands of Zulus and Basutos and Pondos amongst them, and for weeks past, as though they had known what was coming, they had been preparing silently and stealthily to pay off some of the long-standing debt that they and their forefathers owed to the hated Boers. They had buried weapons, knives, hatchets, knob-kerries, and assegais, in all sorts of places about the mines and their compounds, and the first thing they did when they found themselves free was to recover these.

Then they did one, at least, of the things the Boers expected them to do. They battered in the doors of the liquor bars, helped themselves to all they could lay their hands on, and set fire to the rest to light them on their way of vengeance and destruction. But then, instead of looting the other shops or attacking the houses of the residents, they closed in from all sides on the Police Barracks by the Goods Station, the Government Building in the middle of Market Square, and the Court House in Church Square, driving the police before them, falling in scores under the



The whole town was an utter pandemonium.

bullets, but still crushing them back by sheer weight of numbers and fury of attack.

Meanwhile Nesbitt, Maclure, and Mellish had flown hither and thither through the confusion, giving their warnings and their messages, and Robertson had got a squad of about a hundred men that he knew personally in Rissick Street, armed with rifles, bayonets, and revolvers, that seemed to come as if by magic from nowhere.

The truth was that they came out of his own house. The first score or so of men who had arrived whom he knew and could trust, he had taken in and put to work, and these had set about dismantling the house and outbuildings as though their intention was to level them with the ground.

Down in the big cellar, under the bar-room, casks, ostensibly full of good liquor, were smashed to pieces and found full of neatly packed rifles and carbines. Cases of whisky and champagne held revolvers and cartridges carefully stowed in the straw cases that should have held the bottles. Floors were pulled up, and ceilings torn down, mattresses and pillows were cut open, and all sorts of impossible places ransacked, and from everywhere rifles, revolvers, cartridges, and bandoliers were dragged out.

Then the front door was thrown open, names were shouted out, and men began to file quickly into the bar-room. Here Robertson and his assistants, standing behind the bar, passed the weapons and ammunition over, and the file disappeared through the back door leading into Joubert Street.

In a marvellously short space of time five hundred men were armed and ready for action, and these Robertson, who promptly assumed unquestioned command, divided into two parties, one of which he dispatched to the Park Station, with orders to pull up the rails and cut the wires on both sides of it. The other he marched down to Commissioner Street, and then along to the Empire Music Hall, which he broke open without the slightest ceremony.

Then, leaving a strong guard in the street and at the door, he got lights and went in with a dozen men. Under the stage and beneath the floor of the hall, covered by old scenery and all sorts of litter, and stacked away in old packing-cases and dress baskets, he discovered another small arsenal of weapons and ammunition, which were promptly passed up and delivered to those who had been admitted by the guard to the hall, and were eagerly waiting for them.

From the music-hall he went and did the same thing at the Standard Theatre in Market Street, and by the time this was rifled of its long-hidden war-like stores he had about twelve hundred men ready for work. These naturally sorted themselves out, according to their various nationalities, so that, in accordance with plans that had been many a time hopelessly talked over—plans that they would have carried out before but for the impossibility of getting arms without being discovered—Nesbitt, Maclure, and Mellish found themselves at the head of a well-armed troop of three or four hundred Australians, Canadians, Natalians, and Cape Colonials.

There were only about a thousand police actually in Johannesburg, for the authorities had trusted almost entirely to the forts and batteries to overawe the city. Had it been daylight these thousand well-armed men might have been sufficient to clear the streets, but it was a dark, drizzly night, and they stood no chance against the thousands of half-drunken, infuriated savages which the act of their own commanders had let loose upon them. Hundreds were shot, but hundreds more sprang up out of the darkness and came on. Those in the streets were surrounded and pulled down and battered to death to a man.

While this was going on something else even more serious had been happening. Robertson, when the wires had been cut and the rails pulled up, held a hurried consultation with his three captains and decided to join in the attack on the police barracks with their full strength, for it was known that large quantities of arms and ammunition were stored there. If they could take that and get the arms served out before daylight there would be a chance, at

any rate, to make a good fight for their lives and liberties, instead of being starved to death or shot down helplessly like cattle stricken by rinderpest.

The three companies had been marched into the gardens between Plein Street and De Villiers Street, in which the telephone office stands, and there the consultation had taken place. Just as the decision had been arrived at, a pale flash shone through the misty darkness in the direction of Hospital Hill; then came the bang of a gun and the screech of a shell overhead. It struck one of the sheds of the goods station and burst. Almost instantly a bright glare of flame sprang up to join the other conflagrations that were now raging in the Golden City.

"Come along, boys!" Robertson shouted as he saw the flames leap up.

"There isn't a minute to lose now. We must have those guns out of the barracks and then get the women and children into something like safety in a hurry. The whole place will be burning before daylight, for those blackguards will blaze away now so long as there's a house standing or a living thing in Johnny'sburg. Yes, there they go all round. I guess that means that the Zaps have cleared out and left us to face the music. Come on, boys, let's get it over!"



It struck one of the sheds and burst.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

ALTHOUGH it was less than a couple of hundred yards to the police barracks, they only just got there in time to save the priceless arms and ammunition, for the Kaffirs were on the point of firing them. Robertson, who spoke three or four of the Kaffir dialects like a native, ran in among them, shouting to them to desist, and telling them that if they burnt the building they would destroy the guns that were wanted to fight the Dutchmen with. Their leaders caught the idea at once, and as natives, and especially Zulus, are nearly always ready to obey an Englishman who speaks his own language, they began flocking round him, asking him with many gesticulations what they should do to destroy the hated Dutchmen.

The first thing that came to his mind was the dynamite stored at the old Johannesburg station on the Station Plein, and in the mine magazines along the Reef. He told them to go and take all they could find, and then creep up as near to the Boer's forts as they could and throw it in. Then when they had got the arms the white men would come and help them.

He told them this more in the hope of getting the worst of them away out of the town than in the expectation that they would do very much damage to the enemy. But the idea of blowing the Boers up in their own forts caught on like wild fire, and hundreds of them rushed away, yelling and shouting and dancing like so many demons in the light of the blazing buildings to do his bidding.

Some hundred or so of the police had either taken refuge in the barracks, or had been caught there when the Kaffirs attacked them, and these had barricaded the doors and were shooting from the windows into the crowd. But they now speedily found that they had an enemy to deal with

very different from the naked and almost unarmed Kaffirs, for the three troops rapidly deployed along the Harrison Street and Bree Street fronts, and poured a terrible volley from six hundred rifles into the windows.

Then a rush was made for the main entrance, the doors were battered in with rifle-butts, and the surviving policemen, terrified by the sudden apparition of this mysterious force, dropped their weapons and ran away to hide themselves as best they could. In a very few minutes the barracks were rifled of their contents, and the weapons and ammunition passed out into the street, and hurriedly distributed to the crowds of men who were waiting for them.

The next work was to get the women and children out of the private houses as quickly as possible, for the shells from the batteries were now dropping fast all over the town. Old Johannesburg and Marshall's Town—that is to say the heart of the city lying to the north and south of Commissioner Street—were blazing furiously in a score of places. The Grand National and the Goldfields' Hotel, Barnato Buildings, Eckstein's, and several large blocks of shops in Commissioner Street and Market Street, were sending up volumes of flame and smoke to the dark, wet skies.

Warehouses and manufactories along Marshall Street, and in the City and Suburban township, were shedding a lurid glare which showed the great, gaunt headworks and tall, slim iron smoke-stacks of the mines along the Reef with weird and ghastly distinctness, until the showers of sparks and burning fragments, hurled far and wide by the bursting shells, fell among the woodwork and the coal-heaps and set them blazing too.

But, happily, in the residential parts of the town to the north and west of the business centres, in Bramfontein, Now Johannesburg, and Doornfontein, where the houses are nearly all detached, or semi-detached, and standing for the most part in their own grounds, not nearly so much damage was done, though here and there a house struck by a chance shell, or fired by a drunken Kaffir, had been wrecked or was in flames.

But still it was bad enough, in all conscience, even here.



The curt order to dismount was enforced by the approach of a revolver.

Crowds of women and children were being hurried through the red mire of the streets, away from the once comfortable homes in which they were leaving nearly everything that remained to them in the world behind them. There was not a minute to be lost, for the flames were spreading fast in every direction, and the artillerymen, not satisfied with the devastation their shells had worked, were beginning to send storms of bullets from their machine-guns into the abyss of flame and smoke which had once been the marvellous New Ophir of the South.

No one had any definite plans beyond getting as many of the helpless ones as possible out of immediate danger, and to this end their escorts guided them as well as they could down through Doornfontein and Jeppesfontein and out on to the road towards Elandsfontein.

And now gradually the fire from the forts began to slacken, for the artillerymen had found other work to do than firing into the sea of smoke and flame below them. Thousands of drink-maddened Kaffirs, armed with all sorts of weapons, carrying large packages of dynamite cartridges, had been swarming up the hills and creeping up close round the forts, careless of the shells and the hail of machine-gun bullets that went whistling away over their heads to be wasted in the burning town below.

It was not until they came charging up out of the darkness to the very muzzles of the guns that the artillerymen saw them and recognised the peril which threatened them. Scores were, of course, swept down at first onset, but where a score fell a hundred came on. Then the dynamite cartridges began to fall in showers inside the forts, exploding, spreading death and ruin through the crowded streets. Then the Kaffirs, drunk with liquor and the prospect of battle, climbed up to the earthworks over the heaps of dead bodies that lay about them, and axe and knife and club went to work in the wild exultation of pitiless revenge so long as a policeman or an artilleryman could be found alive to slay.

Meanwhile the two men who had so unwittingly let loose the destroying storm which had burst in such fearful fashion over their own heads, had managed to fight their way on horseback with about a score of their best mounted men out of Church Square and up through Eloff Street to Park Station, hoping to get an engine and a carriage to take them to Pretoria, where they intended to report simply the revolt of the British residents and the Kaffirs, and the consequent destruction of Johannesburg in obedience to orders.

They had, of course, no idea of the good use to which the English and Colonials had been putting that time of darkness and confusion. If they had known that there were nearly five thousand of the men armed with Martinis, Lee-Metfords, and the new German Mauser rifles which had been seized at the police barracks, and that of these nearly a thousand were mounted on horses which had been taken out of the stables of the town or captured from the police, they would have probably thought it necessary to amplify their story somewhat.

But they really knew very little of what had happened. They knew that some of the English—as they termed everyone, save themselves, who spoke English—had somehow got hold of a few rifles, and had perhaps done some damage with them, but as the Commandant had previously issued orders for his men to gradually withdraw to the forts when the rioting began, and leave the Kaffirs to their work of destruction, he didn't trouble himself about their disappearance.

The one thought of the two worthies was how to get away from the burning town to Pretoria, make their report, and come back by daybreak with sufficient mounted burghers to cut off such fugitives as might have escaped with their lives, and so settle the Outlander question.

But when they reached the Park station they found the wires down and the rails up, which certainly did not look like the work of Kaffirs.

On making this unpleasant discovery they started off down the line to ride to Elandsfontein, the junction where the Krügersdorp and Johannesburg branch line joins the main line from the Natal border to Pretoria. Here at least they would be certain to find the wires intact, and an engine to take them to the capital, should they be wanted.

This, however, was just what Commander Robertson, as he may be properly called for the present, had no intention of allowing anybody to do if he could prevent it. With the instinct of an old campaigner and a born strategist, he had long seen that Elandsfontein was the key both of

Johannesburg and Pretoria, and he saw now that the only chance of anything like success in the desperate venture, which might indeed well have been called a forlorn hope, lay in seizing it at once, and holding it for the time being at all costs.

Consequently, the moment the police barracks had been captured he had dispatched Nesbitt and Maclure with their troops of between three and four hundred men each to ride out, surround the station, pull up the metals, and cut the wires to the north, seize all the rolling stock in the depot, and prepare trains for the south with all possible speed.

The result of this manoeuvre was that Commandant Schutte and Lieutenant Tossel, with their score of men, reached the outskirts of the junction only to ride unsuspectingly into the middle of Nesbitt's troop, who promptly took them all prisoners with the unfortunate exception of the English Boer, who had somehow scented the danger more quickly than the others, and had turned tail and had ridden for his life as fast as his horse's legs could carry him, leaving the rest to their fate.

Knowing the country to a yard, he managed to keep out of harm's way till he reached Zuurfontein, the first station on the Pretoria side of the junction, from which he sent the message which resulted in Mr. Secretary Leyds being so suddenly called away from the pleasant society in which he was eating his dinner on that memorable New Year's Eve.

The wrathful amazement of Commandant Schutte, on finding himself a prisoner in the hands of those whom he believed to be unarmed, and at the mercy of the artilleryists of the Johannesburg forts, was inadequately portrayed even by the quite unprintable language which he made use of when the fact was actually brought home to him by the curt order to dismount, enforced by the approach of a revolver barrel to within about two feet of his face.

Still, he got down, and his men did the same so soon as they saw that instant surrender was the only alternative to sudden death. Their arms and horses were, of course, appropriated with equal promptness, and formed a welcome addition to the war material of Captain Nesbitt's troop.

The junction was already in the hands of the Johannesburgers when the capture was made. It had fallen almost without the firing of a shot, and that for two very obvious reasons. In the first place, those who might have defended it were taken absolutely and utterly unawares by the appearance of the armed British force, which had sprung apparently from nowhere, and in the second place the very last thing that the Pretorian Government would have dreamt of was what had actually happened during the last two or three pregnant hours in Johannesburg.

The heart of the railway system of the Transvaal, although it contained a large amount of rolling-stock, a couple of train-loads of war-like stores, consisting of field-pieces, machine-guns, small-arms, and ammunition waiting to be forwarded to the frontiers as required, had been left ungarded save by a few police and artillerymen, because it was looked upon as being as absolutely safe from attack as Pretoria itself.

If it had not been for the fact that the Johannesburgers had found themselves, when the terrible task of the exodus from the ruined city had at length been achieved, with some three thousand women and children dependent on them for protection and escort to a place of safety, this capture of Elandsfontein might have been a very serious thing for Pretoria itself. It is true that many of the women, with heroic self-forgetfulness, entreated their pro-

tectors to allow them to be taken prisoners by the Boers, and to make a dash for the Natal border, where they could join hands with the loyal colonists, but this, of course, was not to be thought of for a moment by such men as the leaders of the Forlorn Hope from the Golden City.

As party after party came up, some on foot, some on horseback riding double with the mounted men, and others in every kind of conveyance that could be laid hold of in the hurry of the moment, the women and children were stowed away at once into the trains that had been got ready by the bewildered and terrified officials under pain of immediate shooting in case of refusal or delay.

Meanwhile an engine with a car-load of men had been sent up the line to Zuurfontein to pull up the rails and cut the wires and so sever all communications with Pretoria—which, unhappily, was not done until just after Lieutenant Tossel had sent his message and followed it to the capital on an engine which happened to be in the station.

Almost simultaneously a train of open trucks, carrying two hundred men and two machine-guns, with ample ammunition, had been dispatched down the line to Germiston, where the line from the Free State border joins the one from Natal, with orders to destroy all communication with the Free State, cut the wires on the Natal line, and, if possible, go on and seize Heidelberg about twenty miles lower down.

Two trains of the Cape Government Railway saloon carriages with three powerful engines, two of the Natal trains, each with an engine, which had been seized by the Boers on the outbreak of hostilities, were waiting at the junction till they should be wanted, and, in addition to these, about twenty of the Netherlands Railway Company's carriages and five of their engines had been taken by the Johannesburgers, in addition to the two ammunition trains.

There was thus ample rolling-stock for the conveyance of the fugitives to the Natal border at Charlestown. The only question was getting them there through the hundred and ten miles of hostile country, which, within a few hours, and in spite of all precautions that could be taken, would be swarming with the peasant-soldiers of the Republic.

The project was indeed a desperate one, but it was the only one that held out the faintest hope of success. Behind them to the one side were the blazing ruins of Johannesburg, and on the other Pretoria; east and west were wide stretches of country impassable to them, hampered as they were. More than a hundred miles away to the south-east lay their only possible land of refuge, and there, under the shadow of Amajuba Hill, they might find their countrymen fighting for life and country on the scene of their former shame.

(To be continued.)



There was not a minute to be lost.

SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 is. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Fortune's Sport," by Mrs. Williamson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. John Sewell, of "The Lund," Lamplugh, Cockermouth. Attempts for this week's prize may deal with ANY SUBJECT and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand London, W.C., by Monday, April 23rd. Post-cards only, please.

The Retort Courteous.

At a young folks' social party held recently, the hostess noticed one of the girl guests wiping her spoon on the clean tablecloth, and wishing to make an example of her for her bad manners at table, she said:

"Is that the way you do at your own house, Mary Green?"

"Please, ma'am, no," replied the girl spoken to, quite innocently, "we always have clean spoons placed beside us there."

With that the hostess wished she had never spoken.

J. S.

The War Fever.

THE following conversation was heard in a well-known drapery establishment whose head is colonel of the local volunteers!

Traveller: "Can I see Mr. Blank?"

Shopwalker: "Sorry, sir, the colonel is out."

Traveller: "Oh, the manager will do."

Shopwalker: "Very sorry, sir, the major is also out."

Traveller: "Then, the under manager."

Shopwalker: "Very, very sorry, sir, the sergeant has just gone."

Traveller: "Ah! I'll call to-morrow. You can mention Captain Smartman was here."

J. T. M.

One for the Major.

On a recent occasion, a Birmingham officer in the army and his brother officers gave a dinner. One of the guests present was a fire-eating, quarrelsome major, who took advantage of his rank to lay down the law of military discipline in a somewhat offensive manner. The Birmingham gentleman listened to the oracle in silence for some moments, and then observed during a lull:

"I say Major, I saw a man to-day who would give any sum of money for the pleasure of kicking you."

"Kicking me!" exploded the incensed officer. "Kicking me! I call upon you to name him instantly!"

"I hardly like to tell you," said the gentleman with assumed reluctance.

"I insist upon knowing," roared the Major, livid with rage.

"Oh, well, then, I'll tell you. It was a fellow named Jones, who has lost his legs in an explosion, and pulls himself about on wheels."

C. R. F.

The Colonel and the Lady.

COLONEL BADEN-POWELL formed one of an evening party which a young lady of his acquaintance favoured with a song. A number of gentlemen who were not intimate with the lady desired the Colonel to request her to sing again.

Going up to the lady the Colonel made known the request.

"I hope you'll excuse me," was her reply, "but really, I cannot. If I were to sing again I would be blown."

Returning to the gentlemen Baden-Powell was questioned if she would sing.

In a voice loud enough to be heard over the whole room, he replied:

"She says she'll be blowed if she will."

F. W.

A Cheap Dinner.

AN Irishman walked into Lipton's dining rooms in the City Road the other day and ordered one of his 4½d. dinners.

Presently a man seated at another table asked the waiter if he would fetch him a pint of bitter ale, at the same time giving him threepence.

The waiter was soon back, but, by mistake, gave the bitter ale to the Irishman, who, seizing the chance, soon made it disappear with his dinner, and on leaving he exclaimed:

"Well, Oi expected soup, meat, vegetables, and pastry, but, begorra! Oi'm hanged if Oi know how Lipton manages to give away a pint ov bitter ale in the bargain, an' all for 4½d.!"

E. K.

An Obliging Emigrant.

AN Irish emigrant, on his arrival at Liverpool stopped for a moment to examine a coat hanging in front of a clothing store, when the proprietor asked him if he would try on a coat or two.

"To be shure Oi will," he responded good naturedly, consulting his watch, and he went in and set to work.

No matter how often he found his fit, he tried on another and another till he had tried on about fifty.

Then again looking at his watch, he asked for his own coat, saying:

"Toime's up; Oi can't stay no longer."

"Don't you want a coat?" said the shopman.

"No," said the Irishman surprised. "Shure, ye asked me to try on a coat or two, and Oi've done it. Hang the man who won't oblige another when he can."

W. L.

Would Have Her Removed.

A SCOTCHMAN in London was at the bedside of his dying wife, who had been born in the Highlands, and always retained a strong affection for her "ain countree."

"Promise me," she said to her husband, "that you will bury me in the Hielans, for I can never rest quiet here."

Tammas was silent a moment, not liking the thought of the expense. Then he said:

"Weel, weel, I'll jist see about it; if I find that ye canna rest quiet here, I'll jist hae ye removed to the Hielans."

W. C. L.

A Poser!

At Plymouth there is, or was, a small green opposite the Government House, over which no one was permitted to pass. Not a creature was allowed to approach save the General's cow; and the sentries had particular orders to turn away anyone who ventured to cross the forbidden turf.

One day an elderly Duchess, having called at the General's, in order to make a short cut bent her steps across the lawn, when she was arrested by the sentry calling out, and desiring her to return and go the other road.

She remonstrated; the man said he could not disobey his orders, which were to prevent anyone crossing that piece of ground.

"But," said the Duchess with a stately air, "do you know who I am?"

"I don't know who you may be, ma'am," replied the immovable sentry, "but I knows who you b'aint—you b'aint the General's cow."

So the Duchess wisely gave up the argument, and went the other way.

J. T.

The War Correspondent Obeyed Orders.

MURAT HALSTEAD, the great journalist of war times, tells of the story of how he went to General Sherman at headquarters once for the "latest news from the front." He was armed with many fine introductory letters, but decided to rely mainly on one given him by Sherman's brother-in-law.

He found the General at a little railroad town in Kentucky, pacing uneasily to and fro in front of headquarters' tent, his great mind revolving some critical plan of campaign.

Halstead advanced and presented Ewing's letter.

The General opened it somewhat impatiently, read a few lines, folded it, and said:

"Ah, you come from Ewing, and you desire to have 'all the latest news'—the 'next probable move' of our army, eh? There's a train leaving this town for Cincinnati at two o'clock. Here, take this ticket, and step over there and get your dinner, and then get on that train."

"Well, but, General Sherman—" began the newspaper man, hoping to re-open the case; but Sherman waved him off.

"Go over and get a good dinner; we have plenty, and always strive to treat our friends well—but be sure you don't miss that two o'clock train!" And Halstead, realising the sort of a man he had to deal with, wisely obeyed.

J. A.

Tommy's Temperature.

TOMMY had had pneumonia, so had been for some time in hospital, where they had treated him so well that he was much adverse to the prospect of being discharged as "cured."

One day the doctor was taking his temperature, and while Tommy had the thermometer in his mouth the doctor moved on, and happened to turn his back.

Tommy saw his chance. He pulled the thermometer out of his mouth and put it into a cup of cocoa, replacing it at the first sign of the medico turning.

When that worthy examined the thermometer he looked first at Tommy, then back to the thermometer, and gasped:

"Well, my little man, you're not dead, but you ought to be!"

A. H.

It Was, Too!

A CLERGYMAN who was in the habit of quoting from various sermons, without giving due credit to the authors, did so to such an extent as to provoke the ire of one of his parishioners. On a certain Sunday a quotation was made by the pastor.

The parishioner rose from his seat and said:

"That's Blair."

Another quotation soon followed.

"That's Fuller."

Still another theft.

"That's Channing," said the accuser, as he arose from his pew cushion for the third time.

"Put that man out," bellowed the reverend gentleman.

"That's original," said his critic, "that's his own."

T. S.

Sat on His Hat.

ON one occasion, when a public reception was given to Daniel Webster at a hotel in Boston, a particularly obsequious office-seeker was introduced. The man kept on bowing and scraping until the great man was tired of him, and, bidding him good-day, settled down heavily into the nearest chair. But the man, instead of passing on and giving a chance to the next comer, lingered near and seemed to have something still on his mind, though he looked very blissful. Webster observed this and said, not very good-naturedly:

"May I ask you, sir, if you want anything more of me?"

"Oh—oh, no!" said the man, smirking; "only perhaps I may be permitted to remark that I am proud to say that my hat is having the estimable honour to occupy the same chair with Daniel Webster!"

Webster had, as a matter of fact, sat down on the man's tall beaver hat.

W. E.

OUR BOAT-RACE COMPETITION.

THE official result of the Boat-Race, as given by the judge, was:
Winner: CAMBRIDGE.

Distance won by: 20 lengths. Time: 18min. 47sec.

Of course, most of the competitors gave Cambridge to win, but nobody gave the exact distance, as it was not expected that the historic event should be such a procession; but several gave the correct time.

The prize of £5 has been awarded to Mr. Henry Cudell, of 23 High Street, Woolwich, whose coupon read: Winner, Cambridge. Distance won by, 18½ lengths. Time, 21min.

His two witnesses were: Mr. A. S. Horon, of 132 Robert Street, Plumstead, S.E., and Mr. George Medcalf, of 16 Admaston Road, Plumstead, S.E., and £1 has been sent to each.



THEIR hut stands on the "Old Road" in the outskirts of Crow Hollow. It was once used as a shoemaker's shop, and boasts of but one room, but the happiness of the Flanderses depends to no great extent upon space.

An air of general decay has settled heavily upon the cabin, which seems to be shrinking into the earth. The window is broken and stuffed with rags and a hat or two, the slates are falling off, and the settling of one corner suggests that a high wind would complete its demolition.

It would seem, too, that the little time-painted abode had slipped from its original foundation, for so close does it stand to the road that a passing waggon-load of hay has been known to lift the door which unfortunately swings outward, from its hinges.

Jim, the founder of the family, tramped into Crow Hollow (from no one knew where) and took possession of the hut more than forty years ago. He was repeatedly invited to vacate by the town's-people, but he grinned at them for their trouble, and knocked their dogs about, and persisted in staying.

Here he lazed and fiddled away the days and nights—except when he visited a villager's hencoop, or, by way of diversion (after drinking his fill of bad whiskey), smashed a neighbour's window, or "held up" an inoffensive farmer for a gallon of cider.

One morning, after a tribe of gypsies had left the Hollow, a red-cheeked young woman wearing a man's hat, was seen frying pork in a camp kettle at the rear of Jim's shanty, while he, with a conspicuous black eye and a missing tooth, was lounging about the door.

The years that followed brought children and an increased bad reputation to the pair.

Was anything missing, no one questioned who were the culprits; the constable simply arrested a Flanders—if the old man was drunk and Tom was not to be found, the old woman was substituted. So it occurred that the Flanderses, as an individual family seldom graced the home.

Martha, the little one, toddled about, dodging blows and making friends with stray cats, until she was big enough to climb the stone wall which divides the "Old Road" from the cemetery, and there, in a world of gravestones and daisies, she found a safe hiding-place.

There she spent whole days, creeping home only when

her sharp, little ears could detect neither oaths nor blows mingled with the strains from the violin. There she whimpered nonsense to gravestones, confiding to them that her mother used to be pretty and have white teeth.

One summer when Martha was grown tall and awkward, she crept into the village school.

She did not take to books readily, and it hurt somewhat to be called "a Flanders," but she mastered the alphabet before she gave it up.

One day Jim came into school to see his child. He was intoxicated, but that she did not mind so much as that he should steal the dinner basket and books from the one little girl who had befriended her.

She cried a little over the lesson book which she had borrowed, before she put it back in the teacher's desk that night.

She did not go to school again, but spent her time, mostly, sitting in the doorway of the hut, looking across the graveyard, and wishing the gao! was further away, and her father was not Jim Flanders.

Unusually reckless must have been the Flanderses, for it came about one summer that, with the exception of Martha, they, an unbroken family, were sojourning in the county gaol.

Thirty miles (in the opposite direction from the temporary home of Tom and the old man) was not far for Martha to walk, and it brought her to Dunville.

She was accosted by the Tabor sisters, who, in great distress, were trying to get old Spooney to take his head from the apple boughs and trot along as he should.

Without doubt Spooney was surprised into obedience, for to have a long-legged girl to crawl along his back and pull his ears and take the apples out of his mouth was a new experience.

For this timely assistance the Tabors were duly grateful, and Martha was invited to ride. It may have been that my heroine was nervous from fasting, and her long walk, or perhaps the little woman seemed over trustful, thus appealing to the romantic in her, for certain it is that she romanced dreadfully in reply to their kindly questionings.

Before the Tabor cottage was reached she was told that she might try the housework for the sisters.

Poor Martha, so earnestly did she take it up, that broken dishes, broken window panes and even broken broomsticks were the results.

The Tabors were astounded, but their faith in Martha was great; a girl who could start old Spooney from a meal of apples was to be treated with consideration.

"It's her great strength, Nancy; we must be patient."

Just then came a crash from the kitchen, and Miss Nancy decided it was time to be firm.

"We'll have to discharge her," she sighed, as she made her way to the kitchen.

There on the floor sat Martha, rocking to and fro and moaning; "Oh, dear, what have I done, what have I done!" while her tears were raining down upon the fragments of the china bowl that had descended to the Tabor's from their great-great-grandmother. But Miss Nancy did not discharge her; in fact, she even concealed the mishap from Lucy.

Martha's hair became more manageable, and her cheeks filled out. In a few months Miss Nancy had taught her to spell a few words, which pleased the girl indifferently; but when she discovered in herself an appreciation for colour combinations and, with a little instruction, was able to weave hints from nature into a little cape for one of the sisters, she was very happy indeed.

One night Miss Lucy was horrified to find a drunken tramp in the kitchen; Martha was pressing a bundle into his hands. The man swaggered out of the house, grinning maliciously, while Martha, with a tiny red spot on either cheek, hurried about her work.

Martha did not come to the sitting room that night to prayers.

"They're stole," she made answer, when Miss Nancy intimated that another gown would better become her at the dinner table; and the most diligent search could not produce a shred of clothing belonging to the girl.

In the days that followed, Martha's step lost something of its lightness, and her eyes became shifting and uneasy.

One morning a little later she was gone. No word, no intimation; simply gone.

Of course it was "ungrateful" for Martha to leave without "notice," but as Miss Nancy said, "If she had been as mean as some she would have stayed till she got the new clothes which were promised her, to replace those that were stolen."

Fifty miles from Dunville is Newtown, and here Martha plodded. There were months of discouragement for her and hard fighting for life; but Newtown was not yet grown large enough to be altogether heartless, and its inhabitants were mostly working people.

How she accomplished it the chronicles do not relate! but in a year she was the possessor of a little stock of millinery, and had patronage enough to pay her rent.

That the young minister should seek her company was not altogether surprising, for Martha had improved wonderfully. Her cheeks were like the ripe side of a peach, and her figure was lithe and pleasing.

It mattered little to her that the pale young theologian's head barely reached to her shoulder, or that a fall had for ever deprived him of a straight back. That he sought her was the thought that filled her hours.

I think she must have been very happy just then; at least she saw much of young Jackson, and if she found it hard to read the book of prayers which he gave her, the fact detracted nothing from her happiness in fondling it. Softer lights lived in her eyes, which sometimes did not close all night from happy thoughts.

One night the window in her little shop was broken, and a few cheap femininities therein displayed were stolen. The thief was speedily brought to justice, however; thanks to young Jackson.

When Martha was called to identify her goods she looked straight past the bedraggled finery into the face of the thief and refused to swear to ownership.

For a few weeks Martha's burglar hung about her shop and after a little her stock dwindled to nothing.

One night he went to young Jackson for money, and it was on that night that Martha disappeared from Newtown.

Jackson found under his door the next morning a scrawly note, signed "Martha," which merely said she wasn't an orphan and hoped that he would forgive her; there was a little money, too, inclosed in the note, which that young man promptly placed in the missionary box.

Only a few years have passed since then, but Martha's beauty is gone, and she idles all day in the Flanderses' hut—doing no more than she can help in the way of housekeeping and thinking of what might have been had her father not been Jim Flanders. E. T. WAITE.

The Battle of Manchester.

ALL the French and Germans in England at the present time secretly arm, and at a given signal travel from all parts of the country and concentrate in Lancashire and Yorkshire with a view to assisting the landing of troops from France and Germany. They destroy bridges, cut telegraph wires, and tear up railway lines, so that the north of England is practically isolated. Simultaneously with this concentration war is formally declared by France and Germany.

One Sunday evening the French advance on Gorton, which is defended by the 2nd Manchesters. A vivid word picture is drawn by Mr. Tracy of this fearful fight, and a magnificent illustration, showing the Manchester men in their trenches, has been drawn by Mr. Lawson Wood, and appears in this week's *Pearson's Weekly*.

Every man in Lancashire—in fact every man in the United Kingdom—should at least get this instalment of the serial. A concise summary will enable the reader to pick up the thread of the story at this point with ease.

TWO GOOD NOVELS.

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A DUEL IN THE AIR.

WHAT was their real name? Were they really brothers? How had it chanced that they arrived the same day and hour at the tent of Peter Longman, a brave Alsatian and genuine colossus, who moved from village to village his gaily-decorated baraque of trained lions, epic wrestlers, and two-hundred-pound women juggling with knives and cannon balls?

But, whatever the chance, it is nevertheless certain that one morning, on the grand square of the town of Chaumont, the brawny Alsatian, seated before his equipage, reflecting, perhaps, upon the vicissitudes of this world, meditations justified by the very meagre receipts of the previous evening's performance, saw suddenly two young men stop before him.

"What do you wish, my friends?" said he, with a none too polite intonation, for Peter Longman at the moment was not in his usual genial and good-humoured frame of mind.

"To engage with your troupe," responded they with equal brevity.

"But what can you do?"

"Anything you call for; in a word, everything."

"A pretty big claim, my boys, did you but know it," Longman returned doubtfully.

"A true one all the same. Let us prove it."

"Bon! You are strong, eh? Then go yonder where a cart loaded with stone fell in the ditch this morning and get it out of the way quick; it worries me."

"So be it."

And Dyk, with the word, glided under the vehicle, and with a single powerful heave of his sturdy loins lifted it from the rut and set it erect, whilst Dak, harnessing himself between the shafts, dragged it like a feather's weight to the side of the highway. Longman opened wide his astonished eyes, but continued the test.

"And agile?"

Scarcely had he put the question when the two young men, with a double somersault backward and a hand-spring forward, leaped clear over his head.

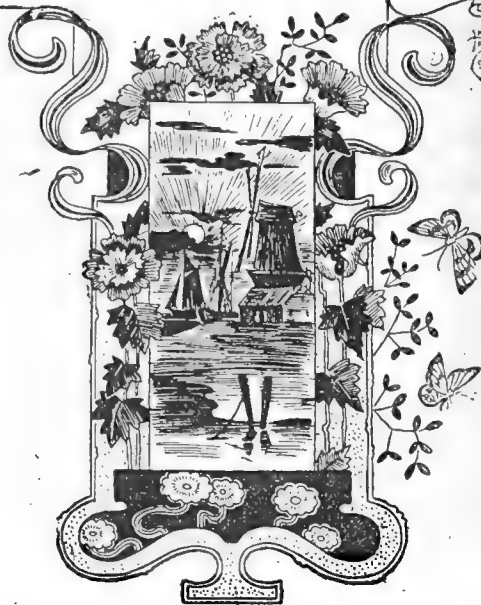
Longman was thunderstruck. Six feet three he stood in his buskins, and yet over his head they had gone with the agile lightness of flying birds.

"But what wages do you want?" demanded he when he had recovered his voice a little.

"Food and lodging. As for money—well, decide it for yourself."

The bargain was quickly struck. And, for a fact, with the coming of the two unknown, fortune returned to the Longman equipage. That night, and for two weeks longer, the tent was overflowing, and when, at the end of that time, Peter deemed that the hour had come to shift his quarters, the municipality itself took steps to retain him.

Nothing more graceful, robust, or finer to look at had ever been seen in the town of Chaumont, or elsewhere



than these two stalwart lads, who, balancing on the tight-rope, vaulting in the sawdust, or swinging from the bar of the flying trapeze, seemed to have but one body and a single will between them. Leaping, whirling, pirouetting in the air before an entranced and breathless crowd, then with incomparable grace and lightness dropping to their feet hand in hand, like Siamese twins by an invisible chain; no wonder, I say, the applause sounded like thunder, and, though seats and standing-room were already paid for, pieces of money and golden louis fell in a shower upon the sand of the arena.

Frequently, too, sweet and tender missives accompanied this yellow rain. But never a one of these dainty, scented *billet-doux* had had the honour of a broken seal or an open envelope.

One person only, appeared perfectly indifferent to the two handsome athletes and their perilous exercises and she the sweetest, prettiest, most delicate and delicious little darling it is possible to conceive of—Mille. Netta Longman, daughter of the proprietor; barely turned her sixteenth birthday, fresh and fair as a bit of porcelain, gay as a butterfly, and not unlike a butterfly, when, in skirts of many-coloured and bespangled tarlatan, she swept the ring on a bareback steed and leaped, an "aerial sylph," the gilded hoops and moons of paper. Coquettish, smiling, already half a woman, and as dainty as a portrait by Greuze!

She had begun from the first, in a spirit of mischief, to tease the two friends. Stranger than all else, though she teased and laughed at them continually, she kept them at a respectful distance, and cold and correct, as

became the daughter of the patron of the establishment, she never allowed them to approach the slightest intimacy because of her light-hearted manner.

She was a child as yet, and did not see that when she gave her attention to Dyk and talked too long with him, Dak grew white and trembling, and that a wave of red mounted to Dyk's brow if she chanced to hold Dak, in her wild leaps to the swinging bar, a trifle closer than ordinary.

Meanwhile, Peter, her father, who was becoming a veritable Cæstus by reason of his new attractions, coveted with an ever-growing eagerness the continued services of his two pensionnaires, whose demands, strange to say, did not grow in proportion to the receipts brought in by them. The original tent had long since grown and enlarged into a genuine caravansary, with a troupe of forty or fifty assistants, and increased menagerie and force of waggons and horses, and was now a little kingdom ruled by Peter Longman, more and more astounded as weeks rolled on, that Dyk and Dak were so indifferent to a good fortune, the greater part of which was due to their own work.

He wished, pushed by the fear of their leaving him, to take them into partnership; but at the first overture in this direction he had been received so coldly that the desire to try it again had disappeared. Nevertheless he still thought of it and told himself that in all this coldness and indifference to everything there was something that was most unnatural.

What did it mean? One worked to make a position, and conduct like this was incomprehensible—two young men that apparently and deliberately turned their backs upon an offer such as this, and which, doubtless would never occur again.

Perhaps they contemplated starting a circus of their own. At this thought Peter's blood made but one bound. A circus of their own! *Eh bien!* no, he'd put a stop to that—yes, a stop to that, even if he must give them his daughter to do it.

For Peter, you see, had used his eyes to some purpose, and this thought flashed in his brain like an inspiration of genius. But in repeating his exclamation, the better to digest its purpose, he suddenly perceived that he was confronted with a double embarrassment. Them? Give them his daughter! But there were two of them! Which of the two should it be?

For his part he had no preference. Dyk was the more vigorous. Dak the more supple. Dyk was an incomparable dancer and balancer on the tight-rope and the iron wire, but for swinging and pirouetting on the swinging or the fixed bar, Dyk had never had an equal.

A great embarrassment, truly. My faith! yes; but to win a battle one must always risk something. He began by consulting his wife, who affirmed that neither Dyk nor Dak cared a rap for Netta. Then Netta herself, when consulted, began to laugh and to protest that she would marry both of them or she would marry neither one or the other.

Peter, badgered by these conflicting fires, at last took a decisive resolution. He went straight to the two brothers and explained to them his trouble and dilemma. He desired, he told them, to attach them to him by ties that nothing could break. He only wished that he had two daughters that he might call them both his sons-in-law, but as Providence had only done half its work he must perforce content himself with doing the best he could.



BOVRIL

AGAIN!

Extract from the *Lancet* of March 17th, 1900: After describing the conveyance of wounded from Spearman's Camp to Chieveley, a distance of 24 miles, the writer of the article says: "The end of the train of stretchers and waggons came into view. Hot BOVRIL and stimulants had already been prepared by the men of the Royal Army Medical Corps, great pots of the former resting in the kitchen."

The *Daily Graphic* of March 3rd, 1900, contains an interesting narrative by a surgeon of the Royal Army Medical Corps. The writer says: "Cases now began to pour down from the hill on stretchers, and I soon ran short of my little supply of bandages; but Major — sent up what I sent back for, with a supply of BOVRIL and other comforts for the sick. Suddenly the Boers opened fire on us, and their bullets went into the fire, knocking the sticks about."

"Which of you, then," he said, bluntly, "is willing to become the husband of my dear little Netta?"

Nothing at all of a physiognomist, and absorbed in his mission, the worthy Peter did not notice the anguish suddenly painted upon the visages of the two men.

He innocently repeated his question as if this choice were the easiest thing in the world to make.

Dyk and Dak exchanged a look.

"In fifteen days," said Dyk at last, "we will give you an answer."

"Exactly, in fifteen days, an answer," confirmed Dak, resolutely.

"Ah—h! I comprehend; after the balloon, you mean?" said Longman, cheerfully.

"After the balloon, yes," Dyk and Dak responded, briefly.

* * * * *

The fact is that never was a moment so badly chosen to disturb the two men with matrimonial pre-occupations. Call it chance, if you will, but it was just at this time that a well-known aeronaut had come to Peter and arranged with him for an extraordinary performance, in which, as it rose, his balloon would carry up with it a trapeze attachment, on which the two athletes Dyk and Dak would perform, as long as the eye could see them, their most difficult and perilous exercises.

It was very natural, therefore, in Peter's eyes, that they should wish to wait before giving a decision till the morning succeeding this grave but glorious adventure.

Were the two men, or the two brothers, perhaps, disturbed or uneasy in mind? No one knew, for no one had seen them, they, for several weeks past, having been visible only at the hour of the performance. They had shut themselves into a little court that had been placed at their disposal, and there, on a trapeze swung at first fifteen yards, then twenty, then thirty yards high, they had devoted all their time and skill to practising the wonderful feats with which soon they were to increase their glory, and fill to bursting the money-bags of their genial employer.

The day for the great performance arrived at last. On the square, round which the authorities had drawn a rope and a cordon of police to preserve the peace and the necessary space for the air-ship's ascent, the crowd pushed and swayed in numbers so great that one saw but a moving sea of heads and faces. In the middle of the roped-in space the balloon swayed and balanced gently.

Promptly as the clock struck three there was a stir in the crowd, and on a chariot dexterously driven by Netta herself, Dyk and Dak arrived, handsome as gods, but decidedly funereal in attire, in their ebonyed tights, relieved about the loins with a girdle of silver.

With a gracious salute to the applauding multitude and a bow still more profound to their beautiful driver, they leaped to the basket, and the aeronaut, already in place, the lines were cast off, and they were off for the clouds.

There was a moment's hush, then a roar of renewed

applause. The balloon, with the vigour of a swimmer who sends himself aloft by a stroke of the heel against the sandy bottom, leaped straight into the air. Then from the cradle, one saw lifting themselves two young and slender forms, obscured by the cordage as yet, but erect, a moment later in full sight upon the bar of the trapeze.

The two men, as I say, were erect on the bar, their arms crossed before them, very pale, a simple undulatory motion of the hips alone serving to keep their balance.

Dyk spoke first.

"Dak," said he, "your secret is mine. You love Netta as I, too, love her. Is it not so?"

"It is so," Dak responded. "I love her."

"Are you willing to withdraw and leave it to me to become her husband?" Dak pursued, firmly.

"No; and you—are you willing to leave her to me?"

"A thousand times no!"

"Then?"

"It is fate that must decide between us!"

"The one left living, you mean, to have her for his own?"

"Exactly, the one left living; and, now, quick! on guard with your knife!"

On the breadth of the trapeze they had recoiled as they spoke to the supporting cords and there, hands on their knives, they regarded each other with deadliest hate, heedless alike of the wind that swept them to and fro, and of the grandeur of the scene that opened about them—beneath them the broad green earth, above them the deep blue heavens.

Then, suddenly they flung themselves together, ardent, panting, with fierce, sparkling eyes.

It was a deadly struggle.

With the free arm bent and used as a shield, they forced each other to reverse on the bar, which swayed with their weight. From below came up a deafening murmur, a stifled hurrah! The crowd was admiring the performance.

With rigid muscles they remained thus a moment motionless, one doubled across the other. Then Dyk, by a sudden movement forced the hold of Dak upon the cord and threw himself upon him, their bodies, even in that access of mad rage, continuing to preserve the instinct of equilibrium.

But only for an instant, however, did they thus remain. By a powerful effort Dak in turn forced Dyk to the bar and there, bending over him, with a short, fierce thrust, drove the knife deep into his comrade's throat. A moment later, and with a wild, mocking laugh he, too, was dead, the knife pierced through his own heart, his body flying through space, an inert mass.

And whilst far below there, on the roofs of the city, above the heads of the gaping multitude, lay the tattered remnant of one who had once been Dak, the corpse of Dyk, attached still to the trapeze by a last contraband surmounted by the waving flags of the complation of the stiffening muscles, rose into the blue sunt aeronaut, happily unconscious of all that had been going on.

F. M. T.



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2

THE PAPER FOR THE TEA TABLE.

The Brain Gymnasium

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, **SHORT STORIES**, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by Monday, April 30th, 1900.

No. 94.

THE following sentences are anagrams of geographical names:

TEN HID IN A CANOE.
EACH IRON TRAM.
PLANT ONIONS, ETC.

No. 95.

WHAT is the rendering of:

O
B E D

No. 96.

WHAT words do these lines represent?

Quite firmly fixed by joiner's art,
Reverse it and we fall apart.

No. 97.

If asked to tell what is my FIRST,
I'd say, why, 'tis a weighty matter;
'Tis lifeless; lives; by some thought curst;
Vessel of earth; grows daily fatter.
My SECOND follows, as it should,
And is, in fact, a limitation;
Perchance attached to block of wood
It bears to FIRST a close relation.
My WHOLE an art-assisted growth,
And loved by Britain's lower classes;
'Tis succulent when cooked, and both
As foe or friend to Morpheus, passes.

No. 98.

A MAN, who was just five feet tall, found that his shadow was eight feet long; then, by careful measurement, it was ascertained that a pole threw a shadow just 181 feet in length; and we have the simple puzzle of telling the height of the pole from what we know about the man and the two shadows.

How high was the pole?

No. 99.

FORM a word-square with words rhyming with:

"FLEET," "BEECH," "BREAKER," "CEM."

One of the diagonals must form a word rhyming with "CALM."

RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 70 to 75.

THE prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. D. O'Neill, of 7 Stow Hill, Newport, Mon., whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Lucky Bargee," by Harry Lander, has been sent to the following:

A. C. Day, 34 Bennett Road, Bournemouth, E.
Miss L. Banister, 7 Samuel Street, Crewe.
Miss K. Wilkinson, 1 Woodland Terrace, Plymouth.
A. Grant, Lowfields, Bracebridge, Lincoln.
Miss Cutler, Shirley Place, Shirley, Southampton.
Miss M. Connell, 27 Maidenhead Street, Hertford.
Miss Olive Marcus, 33 Dartmouth Row, Blackheath, S.E.
H. Frost, jun., 3 Fullbrook Road, Junction Road, N.
James Jones, 94A High Street, Swansea.
F. C. Bacot, 108 Sydenham Road North, Croydon.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 76 to 81.

No. 76.

* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

No. 77.

"A rolling stone gathers no moss."

No. 78.

"Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
Her home is on the deep."
—Campbell ("Ye Mariners of England")
HEED-LESS; HEAD-LESS.

No. 79.

No. 80.

No. 81.

11-1-7-2-10-3-8-4-12-5-9-6.

M I S S
I O T A
S T U N
S A N D O W N
O B O E
W O R E
N E E D

Result of the "Special Short Stories" Competition.

OUR readers will remember that we set an anagram to be done by those competitors who sent in correct solutions in "Brain Gymnasium" Nos. 46 to 51.

We are now able to announce that the prize of £2 has been awarded to Mr. J. H. COCKERILL, 17 Essex Street, Kingsland Road, London, N.

All those who chose the 5d. in preference to entering for the anagram, have had the money sent them; but several gave their portion to the F.A.F., for which, on behalf of the little ones, we tender our thanks.

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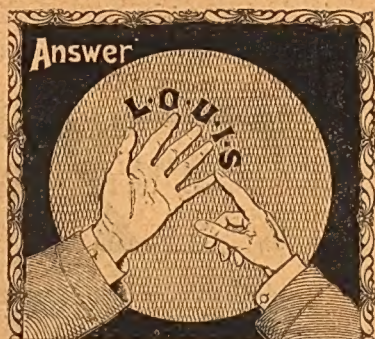
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